THE MAGAZINE OF

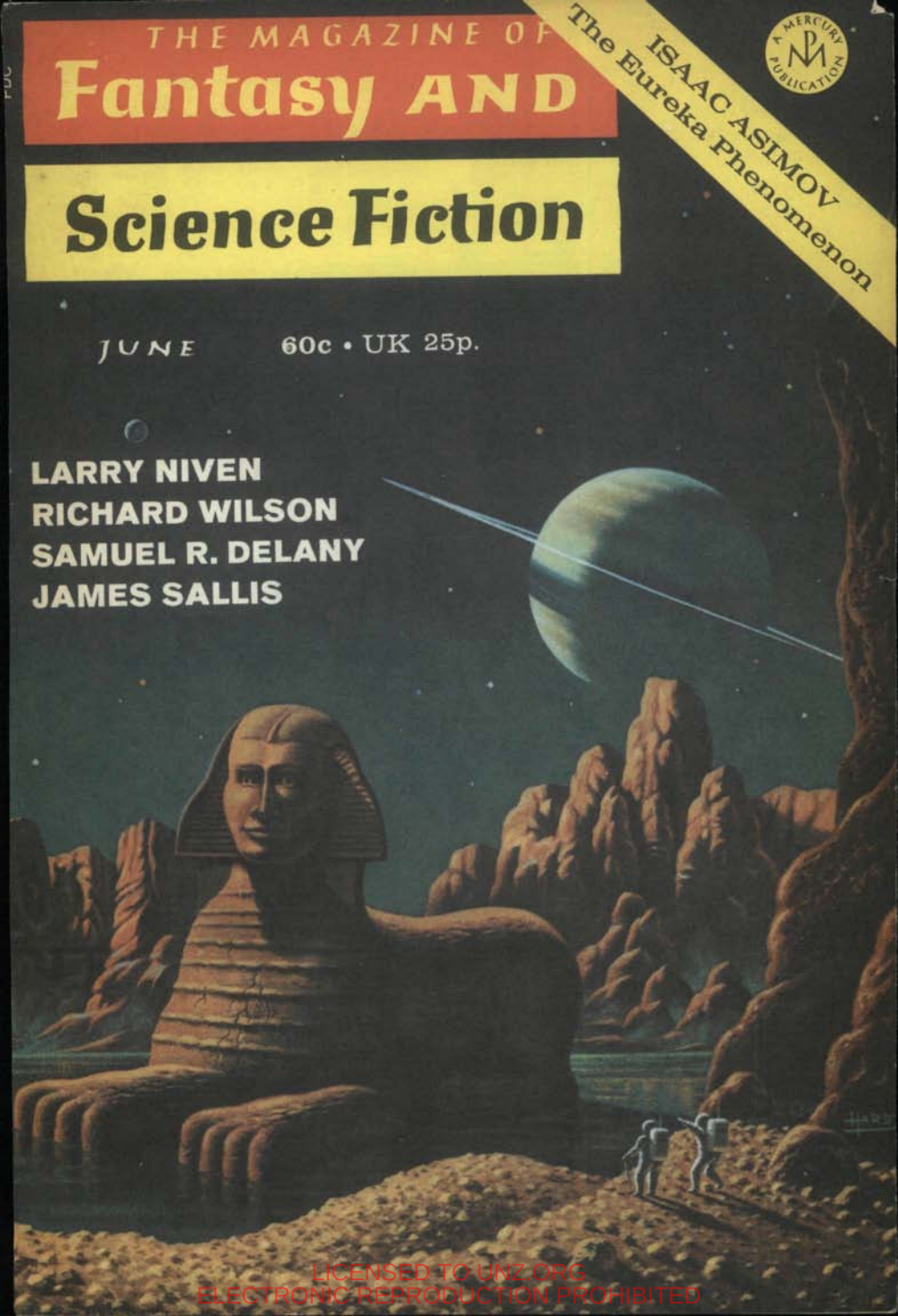
Fantasy AND Science Fiction

ISAAC ASIMOV
The Eureka Phenomenon

A MERCURY PUBLICATION

JUNE 60c • UK 25p.

LARRY NIVEN
RICHARD WILSON
SAMUEL R. DELANY
JAMES SALLIS



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fantasy and Science Fiction

Including Venture Science Fiction

JUNE • 22ND YEAR OF PUBLICATION

NOVELETS

They Fly At Ciron	SAMUEL R. DELANY and JAMES SALLIS	32
The Butterflies of Beauty	JOSEPH GREEN	82

SHORT STORIES

There's A Wolf In My Time Machine	LARRY NIVEN	4
The Day They Had the War	RICHARD WILSON	26
The Man Trainers	STEPHEN BARR	63
The Man Who Collected "The Shadow"	BILL PRONZINI	75
A Tapestry of Little Murders	MICHAEL BISHOP	117

FEATURES

Cartoon	GAHAN WILSON	19
Books	HARLAN ELLISON	20
Films	BAIRD SEARLES	61
Science: The Eureka Phenomenon	ISAAC ASIMOV	107
Index to Volume Forty		130

Cover by David A. Hardy (see page 74)

Edward L. Ferman, EDITOR & PUBLISHER *Isaac Asimov,* SCIENCE EDITOR
Andrew Porter, ASSISTANT EDITOR *Dale Beardale,* CIRCULATION MANAGER
Joseph W. Ferman, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOG CARD NO.: 51-25682

The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Volume 40, No. 6, Whole No. 241, June 1971. Published monthly by Mercury Press, Inc., at 60¢ a copy. Annual subscription $7.00; $7.50 in Canada and Mexico, $8.00 in all other countries. Postmaster: send Form 3579 to Fantasy & Science Fiction, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753. Publication office, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753. Editorial submissions should be sent to 347 East 53rd St., New York, N.Y. 10022. Second Class postage paid at Cornwall, Conn. 06753 and at additional mailing offices. Printed in U.S.A. *© 1971 by Mercury Press, Inc. All rights, including translations into other languages, reserved. Submissions must be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes; the Publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

You've met Hanville Svetz, the animal hating time traveler, in Larry Niven's "Get A Horse!" (Oct. 1969) and "Bird In The Hand" (Oct. 1970). In this latest—and funniest to date—mission, the luckless Svetz blunders sideways in time to a land of wolf men and late risers.

THERE'S A WOLF IN MY TIME MACHINE

by Larry Niven

THE OLD EXTENSION CAGE HAD NO fine controls, but that hardly mattered. It wasn't as if Svetz were chasing some particular extinct animal. Ra Chen had told him to take whatever came to hand.

Svetz guided the cage back to preindustrial America, somewhere in midcontinent, around 1000 AnteAtomic Era. Few humans, many animals. Perhaps he'd find a bison.

And when he pulled himself to the window, he looked out upon a vast white land.

Svetz had not planned to arrive in midwinter.

Briefly he considered moving into the time stream again and using the interrupter circuit. Try another date, try the luck again. But the interrupter circuit was new, untried, and Svetz wasn't about to be the first man to test it.

Besides which, a trip into the past cost over a million commercials. Using the interrupter circuit would nearly double that. Ra Chen would be displeased.

Svetz began freezing to death the moment he opened the door. From the doorway the view was all white, with one white bounding shape far away.

Svetz shot it with a crystal of soluble anesthetic.

He used the flight stick to reach the spot. Now that it was no longer moving, the beast was hard to find. It was just the color of the snow, but for its open red mouth and the black pads on its feet. Svetz tentatively identified it as an arctic wolf.

It would fit the Vivarium well enough. Svetz would have settled for anything that would let him leave this frozen wilderness. He felt uncommonly pleased with himself. A quick, easy mission.

Inside the cage, he rolled the sleeping beast into what might have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

been a clear plastic bag, and sealed it. He strapped the wolf against one curved wall of the extension cage. He relaxed into the curve of the opposite wall as the cage surged in a direction vertical to all directions.

Gravity shifted oddly.

A transparent sac covered Svetz's own head. Its lip was fixed to the skin of his neck. Now Svetz pulled it loose and dropped it. The air system was on; he would not need the filter sac.

The wolf would. It could not breath industrial-age air. Without the filter sac to remove the poisons, the wolf would choke to death. Wolves were extinct in Svetz's time.

Outside, time passed at a furious rate. Inside, time crawled. Nestled in the spherical curve of the extension cage, Svetz stared up at the wolf, who seemed fitted into the curve of the ceiling.

Svetz had never met a wolf in the flesh. He had seen pictures in children's books . . . and even the children's books had been stolen from the deep past. Why should the wolf look so familiar?

It was a big beast, possibly as big as Hanville Svetz, who was a slender, small-boned man. Its sides heaved with its panting. Its tongue was long and red, and its teeth were white and sharp.

Like the dogs, Svetz remembered. The dogs in the Vivarium, in the glass case labeled:

DOG
Contemporary

Alone of the beasts in the Vivarium, the dogs were not sealed in glass for their own protection. The others could not breath the air outside. The dogs could.

In a very real sense, they were the work of one man. Lawrence Wash Porter had lived near the end of the Industrial Period, between 50 and 100 PostAtomic Era, when billions of human beings were dying of lung diseases while scant millions adapted. Porter had decided to save the dogs.

Why the dogs? His motives were obscure, but his methods smacked of genius. He had acquired members of each of the breeds of dog in the world and bred them together over many generations of dogs and most of his own lifetime.

There would never be another dog show. Not a purebred dog was left in the world. But hybrid vigor had produced a new breed. These, the ultimate mongrels, could breath industrial-age air, rich in oxides of carbon and nitrogen, scented with raw gasoline and sulfuric acid.

The dogs were behind glass because people were afraid of them. Too many species had died. The people of 1100 PostAtomic were not used to animals.

Wolves and dogs . . . could one have sired the other?

Svetz looked up at the sleeping

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wolf and wondered. He was both like and unlike the dogs. The dogs had grinned out through the glass and wagged their tails when children waved. Dogs liked people. But the wolf, even in sleep. . . .

Svetz shuddered. Of all the things he hated about his profession, this was the worst: the ride home, staring up at a strange and dangerous extinct animal. The first time he'd done it, a captured horse had seriously damaged the control panel. On his last mission an ostrich had kicked him and broken three ribs.

The wolf was stirring restlessly . . . and something about it had changed.

Something was changing now. The beast's snout was shorter, wasn't it? Its forelegs lengthened peculiarly; its paws seemed to grow and spread.

Svetz caught his breath, and instantly forgot the wolf. Svetz was choking, dying. He snatched up his filter sac and threw himself at the controls.

Svetz stumbled out of the extension cage, took three steps, and collapsed. Behind him, invisible contaminants poured into the open air.

The sun was setting in banks of orange cloud.

Svetz lay where he had fallen, retching, fighting for air. There was an outdoor carpet beneath him, green and damp, smelling of plants. Svetz did not recognize the smell, did not at once realize that the carpet was alive. He would not have cared at that point. He knew only that the cage's air system had tried to kill him. The way he felt, it had probably succeeded.

It had been a near thing. He had been passing 30 PostAtomic when the air went bad. He remembered clutching the interrupter switch, then waiting, waiting. The foul air stank in his nostrils and caught in his throat and tore at his larynx. He had waited through twenty years, feeling every second of them. At 50 PostAtomic he had pulled the interrupter switch and run choking from the cage.

50 PA. At least he had reached industrial times. He could breathe the air.

It was the horse, he thought without surprise. The horse had pushed its wickedly pointed horn through Svetz's control panel, three years ago. Maintenance was supposed to fix it. They *had* fixed it.

Something must have worn through.

The way he looked at me every time I passed his cage. I always knew the horse would get me, Svetz thought.

He noticed the filter sac still in his hand. Not that he'd be—

Svetz sat up suddenly.

There was green all about him. The damp green carpet beneath him was alive; it grew from the black ground. A rough, twisted pillar thrust from the ground, branched into an explosion of red

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and yellow papery things. More of the crumpled colored paper lay about the pillar's base. Something that was not an aircraft moved erratically overhead, a tiny thing that fluttered and warbled.

Living, all of it. A preindustrial wilderness.

Svetz pulled the filter sac over his head and hurriedly smoothed the edges around his neck to form a seal. Blind luck that he hadn't fainted yet. He waited for it to puff up around his head. A selectively permeable membrane, it would pass the right gasses in and out until the composition of the air was—was—

Svetz was choking, tearing at the sac.

He wadded it up and threw it, sobbing. First the air plant, now the filter sac! Had someone wrecked them both? The inertial calendar too; he was at least a hundred years previous to 50 PostAtomic.

Someone had tried to kill him.

Svetz looked wildly about him. Uphill across a wide green carpet, he saw an angular vertical-sided formation painted in shades of faded green. It had to be artificial. There might be people there. He could—

No, he couldn't ask for help either. Who would believe him? How could they help him anyway? His only hope was the extension cage. And his time must be very short.

The extension cage rested a few yards away, the door a black circle on one curved side. The other side seemed to fade away into nothing. It was still attached to the rest of the time machine, in 1103 PA, along a direction eyes could not follow.

Svetz hesitated near the door. His only hope was to disable the air plant. Hold his breath, then—

The smell of contaminants was gone.

Svetz sniffed at the air. Yes, gone. The air plant had exhausted itself, drained its contaminants into the open air. No need to wreck it now. Svetz was sick with relief.

He climbed in.

He remembered the wolf when he saw the filter sac, torn and empty. Then he saw the intruder towering over him, the coarse thick hair, the yellow eyes glaring, the taloned hands spread wide to kill.

The land was dark. In the east a few stars showed, though the west was still deep red. Perfumes tinged the air. A full moon was rising.

Svetz staggered uphill, bleeding.

The house on the hill was big and old. Big as a city block, and two floors high. It sprawled out in all directions, as though a mad architect had built to a whim that changed moment by moment. There were wrought-iron railings on the upper-floor windows, and wrought-iron handles on the screens on both floors, all painted the same dusty shade of green. The screens were wood, painted a different shade of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

green. They were closed across every window. No light leaked through anywhere.

The door was built for someone twelve feet tall. The knob was huge. Svetz used both hands and put all his weight into it, and still it would not turn. He moaned. He looked for the lens of a peeper camera and could not find it. How would anyone know he was here? He couldn't find a doorbell either.

Perhaps there was nobody inside. No telling what this building was. It was far too big to be a family dwelling, too spread out to be a hotel or apartment house. Might it be a warehouse or a factory? Making or storing what?

Svetz looked back toward the extension cage. Dimly he caught the glow of the interior lights. He also saw something moving on the living green that carpeted the hill.

Pale forms, more than one.

Moving this way?

Svetz pounded on the door with his fists. Nothing. He noticed a golden metal thing, very ornate, high on the door. He touched it, pulled at it, let it go. It clanked.

He took it in both hands and slammed the knob against its base again and again. Rhythmic clanking sounds. Someone should hear it.

Something zipped past his ear and hit the door hard. Svetz spun around, eyes wild, and dodged a rock the size of his fist. The white shapes were nearer now. Bipeds, walking hunched.

They looked too human—or not human enough.

The door opened.

She was young, perhaps sixteen. Her skin was very pale, and her hair and brows were pure white, quite beautiful. Her garment covered her from neck to ankles, but left her arms bare. She seemed sleepy and angry as she pulled the door open—manually, and it was heavy, too. Then she saw Svetz.

"Help me," said Svetz.

Her eyes went wide. Her ears moved too. She said something Svetz had trouble interpreting, for she spoke in ancient american.

"What *are* you?"

Svetz couldn't blame her. Even in good condition his clothes would not fit the period. But his blouse was ripped to the navel, and so was his skin. Four vertical parallel lines of blood ran down his face and chest.

Zeera had been coaching him in the american speech. Now he said carefully, "I am a traveler. An animal, a monster, has taken my vehicle away from me."

Evidently the sense came through. "You poor man! What kind of animal?"

"Like a man, but hairy all over, with a horrible face—and claws—claws—"

"I see the marks they made."

"I don't know how he got in. I—" Svetz shuddered. No, he couldn't tell her that. It was insane, utterly insane, this conviction that Svetz's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wolf had become a bloodthirsty humanoid monster. "He only hit me once. On the face. I could get him out with a weapon, I think. Have you a bazooka?"

"What a funny word! I don't think so. Come inside. Did the trolls bother you?" She took his arm and pulled him in and shut the door.

Trolls?

"You're a strange person," the girl said, looking him over. "You look strange, you smell strange, you move strangely. I did not know that there were people like you in the world. You must come from very far away."

"Very," said Svetz. He felt himself close to collapse. He was safe at last, safe inside. But why were the hairs on the back of his neck trying to stand upright?

He said, "My name is Svetz. What's yours?"

"Wrona." She smiled up at him, not afraid despite his strangeness . . . and he must look strange to her, for she surely looked strange to Hanville Svetz. Her skin was sheet white, and her rich white hair would better have fit a centenarian. Her nose, very broad and flat, would have disfigured an ordinary girl. Somehow it fit Wrona's face well enough; but her face was most odd, and her ears were too large, almost pointed, and her eyes were too far apart, and her grin stretched *way* back . . . and Svetz liked it. Her grin was curiosity and enjoyment, and was not a bit too wide. The firm pressure of her hand was friendly, reassuring. Though her fingernails were uncomfortably long and sharp.

"You should rest, Svetz," she said. "My parents will not be up for another hour, at least. Then they can decide how to help you. Come with me, I'll take you to a spare room."

He followed her through a room dominated by a great rectangular table and a double row of high-backed chairs. There was a large microwave oven at one end, and beside it a platter of . . . red things. Roughly conical they were, each about the size of a strong man's upper arm, each with a dot of white in the big end. Svetz had no idea what they were; but he didn't like their color. They seemed to be bleeding.

"Oh," Wrona exclaimed. "I should have asked. Are you hungry?"

Svetz was, suddenly. "Have you dole yeast?"

"Why, I don't know the word. Are those dole yeast? They are all we have."

"We'd better forget it." Svetz's stomach lurched at the thought of eating something that color. Even if it turned out to be a plant.

Wrona was half supporting him by the time they reached the room. It was rectangular and luxuriously large. The bed was wide enough, but only six inches off the floor, and without coverings. She helped him

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

down to it. "There's a wash basin behind that door, if you find the strength. Best you rest, Svetz. In perhaps two hours I will call you."

Svetz eased himself back. The room seemed to rotate. He heard her go out.

How strange she was. How odd he must look to her. A good thing she hadn't called anyone to tend him. A doctor would notice the differences.

Svetz had never dreamed that primitives would be so different from his own people. During the thousand years between now and the present, there must have been massive adaptation to changes in air and water, to DDT and other compounds in foods, to extinction of food plants and meat animals until only dole yeast was left, to higher noise levels, less room for exercise, greater dependence on medicines. . . . Well, why shouldn't they be different? It was a wonder humanity had survived at all.

Wrona had not feared his strangeness, nor cringed from the scratches on his face and chest. She was only amused and interested. She had helped him without asking too many questions. He liked her for that.

He dozed.

Pain from deep scratches, stickiness in his clothes made his sleep restless. There were nightmares. Something big and shadowy, half man and half beast, reached far out to slash his face. Over and over. At some indeterminate time he woke completely, already trying to identify a musky, unfamiliar scent.

No use. He looked about him, at a strange room that seemed even stranger from floor level. High ceiling. One frosted globe, no brighter than a full moon, glowed so faintly that the room was all shadow. Wrought-iron bars across the windows; black night beyond.

A wonder he'd wakened at all. The preindustrial air should have killed him hours ago.

It had been a futz of a day, he thought. And he shied away from the memory of the thing in the extension cage. Snarling face, pointed ears, double row of pointed white teeth. The clawed hand reaching out, swiping down. The nightmare conviction that a wolf had turned into *that.*

It could not be. Animals did not change shape like that. Something must have gotten in while Svetz was fighting for air. Chased the wolf out, or killed it.

But there were legends of such things, weren't there? Two and three thousand years old and more, everywhere in the world, were the tales of men who could become beasts and vice versa.

Svetz sat up. Pain gripped his chest, then relaxed. He stood up carefully and made his way to the bathroom.

The spigots were not hard to solve. Svetz wet a cloth with warm water. He watched himself in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mirror, emerging from under the crusted blood. A pale, slender young man topped with thin blond hair . . . and an odd distortion of chin and forehead. That must be the mirror, he decided. Primitive workmanship. It might have been worse. Hadn't the first mirrors been two-dimensional?

A shrill whistle sounded outside his door. Svetz went to look, and found Wrona. "Good, you're up," she said. "Father and Uncle Wrocky would like to see you."

Svetz stepped into the hall, and again noticed the elusive musky scent. He followed Wrona down the dark hallway. Like his room, it was lit only by a single white frosted globe. Why would Wrona's people keep the house so dark? They had electricity.

And why were they all sleeping at sunset? With breakfast laid out and waiting. . . .

Wrona opened a door, gestured him in.

Svetz hesitated a step beyond the threshold. The room was as dark as the hallway. The musky scent was stronger here. He jumped when a hand closed on his upper arm—it felt wrong; there was hair on the palm; the hard nails made a circlet of pressure points—and a gravelly male voice boomed, "Come in, Mister Svetz. My daughter tells me you're a traveler in need of help."

In the dim light Svetz made out a man and a woman seated on backless chairs. Both had hair as white as Wrona's, but the woman's hair bore a broad black stripe. A second man urged Svetz toward another backless chair. He too bore black markings: a single black eyebrow, a black crescent around one ear.

And Wrona was just behind him. Svetz looked around at them all, seeing how alike they were, how different from Hanville Svetz.

The fear rose up in him like a strong drug. Svetz was a xenophobe.

They were all alike. Rich white hair and eyebrows, black markings. Narrow black fingernails. The broad flat noses and the wide, wide mouths, the sharp white conical teeth, the high, pointed ears that moved, the yellow eyes, the hairy palms.

Svetz dropped heavily onto the padded footstool.

One of the males noticed: the larger one, who was still standing. "It must be the heavier gravity," he guessed. "It's true, isn't it, Svetz? You're from another world. Obviously you're not quite a man. You told Wrona you were a traveler, but you didn't say from how far away."

"Very far," Svetz said weakly. "From the future."

The smaller male was jolted. "The future? You're a time traveler?" His voice became a snarl. "You're saying that we will evolve into something like you!"

Svetz cringed. "No. Really."

"I hope not. What, then?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I think I must have gone sidewise in time. You're descended from wolves, aren't you? Not apes. Wolves."

"Yes, of course."

The seated male was looking him over. "Now that he mentions it, he does look much more like a troll than any man has a right to. No offense intended, Svetz."

Svetz, surrounded by wolf men, tried to relax. And failed. "What is a troll?"

Wrona perched on the edge of his stool. "You must have seen them on the lawn. We keep about thirty."

"Plains apes," the smaller male supplied. "Imported from Africa, sometime in the last century. They make good watch-beasts and meat animals. You have to be careful with them, though. They throw things."

"Introductions," the other said suddenly. "Excuse our manners, Svetz. I'm Flakee Wrocky. This is my brother Flakee Worrel, and Brenda, his wife. My niece you know."

"Pleased to meet you," Svetz said hollowly.

"You say you slipped sideways in time?"

"I think so. A futz of a long way, too," said Svetz. "Marooned. Gods protect me. It must have been the horse—"

Wrocky broke in. "Horse?"

"The horse. Three years ago, a horse damaged my extension cage. It was supposed to be fixed. I suppose the repairs just wore through, and the cage slipped sideways in time instead of forward. Into a world where wolves evolved instead of *Homo habilis*. Gods know where I'm likely to wind up if I try to go back."

Then he remembered. "At least you can help me there. Some kind of monster has taken over my extension cage."

"Extension cage?"

"The part of the time machine that does the moving. You'll help me evict the monster?"

"Of course," said Worrel, at the same time that the other was saying, "I don't think so. Bear with me, please, Worrel. Svetz, it would be a disservice to you if we chased the monster out of your extension cage. You would try to reach your own time, would you not?"

"Futz, yes!"

"But you would only get more and more lost. At least in our world you can eat the food and breathe the air. Yes, we grow food plants for the trolls; you can learn to eat them."

"You don't understand. I can't stay here. I'm a xenophobe!"

Wrocky frowned. His ears flicked forward enquiringly. "What?"

"I'm afraid of intelligent beings who aren't human. I can't help it. It's in my bones."

"Oh, I'm sure you'll get used to us, Svetz."

Svetz looked from one male to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the other. It was obvious enough who was in charge. Wrocky's voice was much louder and deeper than Worrel's; he was bigger than the other man, and his white fur fell about his neck in a mane like a lion's. Worrel was making no attempt to assert himself. As for the women, neither had spoken a word since Svetz entered the room.

Wrocky was emphatically the boss. And Wrocky didn't want Svetz to leave.

"You don't understand," Svetz said desperately. "The air—" He stopped.

"What about the air?"

"It should have killed me by now. A dozen times over. In fact, why hasn't it?" Odd enough that he'd ever stopped wondering about that. "I must have adapted," Svetz said half to himself. "That's it. The cage passed too close to this line of history. My heredity changed. My lungs adapted to preindustrial air. Futz it! If I hadn't pulled the interrupter switch, I'd have adapted back!"

"Then you can breath our air," said Wrocky.

"I still don't understand it. Don't you have any industries?"

"Of course," Worrel said in surprise.

"Internal-combustion cars and aircraft? Diesel trucks and ships? Chemical fertilizers, insect repellents—"

"No, none of that. Chemical fertilizers wash away, ruin the water. The only insect repellents I ever heard of smelled to high heaven. They never got beyond the experimental stage. Most of our vehicles are battery powered."

"There *was* a fad for internal-combustion once," said Wrocky. "It didn't spread very far. They stank. The people inside didn't care, of course, because they were leaving the stink behind. At its peak there were over two hundred cars tootling around the city of Detroit, poisoning the air. Then one night the citizenry rose in a pack and tore all the cars to pieces. The owners too."

Worrel said, "I've always thought that men have more sensitive noses than trolls."

"Wrona noticed my smell long before I noticed hers. Wrocky, this is getting us nowhere. I've *got* to go home. I seem to have adapted to the air, but there are other things. Foods: I've never eaten anything but dole yeast; everything else died out long ago. Bacteria."

Wrocky shook his head. "Anywhere you go, Svetz, your broken time machine will only take you to more and more exotic environments. There must be a thousand ways the world could end. Suppose you stepped out into one of them? Or just passed near one?"

"But—"

"Here, on the other paw, you will be an honored guest. Think of all the things you can teach us! You, who were born into a culture that builds time-traveling vehicles!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

So that was it. "Oh, no. You couldn't use what I know," said Svetz. "I'm no mechanic. I couldn't show you how to do anything. Besides, you'd hate the side effects. Too much of past civilizations was built on petrochemicals. And plastics. Burning plastics produces some of the strangest—"

"But even the most extensive oil reserves could not last forever. You must have developed other power scources by your own time." Wrocky's yellow eyes seemed to bore right through him. "Controlled hydrogen fusion?"

"But I can't tell you how it's done!" Svetz cried desperately. "I know nothing of plasma physics!"

"Plasma physics? What are plasma physics?"

"Using electromagnetic fields to manipulate ionized gasses. You *must* have plasma physics."

"No, but I'm sure you can give us some valuable hints. Already we have fusion bombs. And so do the Europeans . . . but we can discuss that later." Wrocky stood up. His black nails made pressure points on Svetz's arm. "Think it over, Svetz. Oh, and make yourself free of the house, but don't go outside without an escort. The trolls, you know."

Svetz left the room with his head whirling. The wolves would not let him leave.

"Svetz, I'm glad you're staying," Wrona chattered. "I like you. I'm sure you'll like it here. Please let me show you over the house."

Down the length of the hallway, one frosted globe burned dimly in the gloom, like a full moon transported indoors. Nocturnal, they were nocturnal.

Wolves.

"I'm a xenophobe," he said. "I can't help it. I was born that way."

"Oh, you'll learn to like us. You like me a little already, don't you, Svetz?" She reached up to scratch him behind the ear. A thrill of pleasure ran through him, unexpectedly sharp, so that he half closed his eyes.

"This way," she said.

"Where are we going?"

"I thought I'd show you some trolls. Svetz, are you really descended from trolls? I can't believe it!"

"I'll tell you when I see them," said Svetz. He remembered the *Homo habilis* in the Vivarium. It had been a man, an Advisor, until the Secretary-General ordered him regressed.

They went through the dining room, and Svetz saw unmistakable bones on the plates. He shivered. His forebears had eaten meat; the trolls were brute animals here, whatever they might be in Svetz's world—but Svetz shuddered. His thinking seemed turgid, his head felt thick. He had to get out of here.

"If you think Uncle Wrocky's tough, you should meet the European ambassador," said Wrona. "Perhaps you will."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Does he come here?"

"Sometimes." Wrona growled low in her throat. "I don't like him. He's a different species, Svetz. Here it was the wolves that evolved into men; at least that's what our teacher tells us. In Europe it was something else."

"I don't think Uncle Wrocky will let me meet him. Or even tell him about me." Svetz rubbed at his eyes.

"You're lucky. Herr Dracula smiles a lot and says nasty things in a polite voice. It takes you a minute to—Svetz! What's wrong?"

Svetz groaned like a man in agony. "My eyes!" He felt higher. "My forehead! I don't have a forehead any more!"

"I don't understand."

Svetz felt his face with his fingertips. His eyebrows were a caterpillar of hair on a thick, solid ridge of bone. From the brow ridge his forehead sloped back at forty-five degrees. And his chin, his chin was gone too. There was only a regular curve of jaw into neck.

"I'm regressing. I'm turning into a troll," said Svetz. "Wrona, if I turn into a troll, will they eat me?"

"I don't know. I'll stop them, Svetz!"

"No. Take me down to the extension cage. If you're not with me, the trolls will kill me."

"All right. But, Svetz, what about the monster?"

"He should be easier to handle by now. It'll be all right. Just take me there. Please."

"All right, Svetz." She took his hand and led him.

The mirror hadn't lied. He'd been changing even then, adapting to this line of history. First his lungs had lost their adaption to normal air. There had been no industrial age here. But there had been no *Homo sapiens* either. . . .

Wrona opened the door. Svetz sniffed at the night. His sense of smell had become preternaturally acute. He smelled the trolls before he saw them, coming uphill toward him across the living green carpet. Svetz's fingers curled, wishing for a weapon.

Three of them. They formed a ring around Svetz and Wrona. One of them carried a length of white bone. They all walked upright on two legs, but they walked as if their feet hurt them. They were as hairless as men. Apes' heads mounted on men's bodies.

Homo habilis, the killer plains ape. Man's ancestor.

"Pay them no attention," Wrona said offhandedly. "They won't hurt us." She started down the hill. Svetz followed closely.

"He really shouldn't have that bone," she called back. "We try to keep bones away from them. They use them as weapons. Sometimes they hurt each other. Once one of them got hold of the iron handle for the lawn sprinkler and killed a gardener with it."

"I'm not going to take it away from him."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"That glaring light, is that your extension cage?"

"Yes."

"I'm not sure about this, Svetz." She stopped suddenly. "Uncle Wrocky's right. You'll only get more lost. Here you'll at least be taken care of."

"No. Uncle Wrocky was wrong. See the dark side of the extension cage, how it fades away to nothing? It's still attached to the rest of the time machine. It'll just reel me in."

"Oh."

"No telling how long it's been veering across the time lines. Maybe ever since that futzy horse poked his futzy horn through the controls. Nobody ever noticed before. Why should they? Nobody ever stopped a time machine halfway before."

"Svetz, horses don't have horns."

"Mine does."

There was noise behind them. Wrona looked back into a darkness Svetz's eyes could not pierce. "Somebody must have noticed us! Come on, Svetz!"

She pulled him toward the lighted cage. They stopped just outside.

"My head feels thick," Svetz mumbled. "My tongue too."

"What are we going to do about the monster? I can't hear anything—"

"No monster. Just a man with amnesia, now. He was only dangerous in the transition stage."

She looked in. "Why, you're right! Sir, would you mind—Svetz, he doesn't seem to understand me."

"Sure not. Why should he? He thinks he's a white arctic wolf." Svetz stepped inside. The white-haired wolf man was backed into a corner, warily watching. He looked a lot like Wrona.

Svetz became aware that he had picked up a tree branch. His hand must have done it without telling his brain. He circled, holding the weapon ready. An unreasoning rage built up and up in him. Invader! The man had no business here in Svetz's territory.

The wolf man backed away, his slant eyes mad and frightened. Suddenly he was out the door and running, the trolls close behind.

"Your father can teach him, maybe," said Svetz.

Wrona was studying the controls. "How do you work it?"

"Let me see. I'm not sure I remember." Svetz rubbed at his drastically sloping forehead. "That one closes the door—"

Wrona pushed it. The door closed.

"Shouldn't you be outside?"

"I want to come with you," said Wrona.

"Oh." It was getting terribly difficult to think. Svetz looked over the control panel. Eeny, meeny—that one? Svetz pulled it.

Free fall. Wrona yipped. Gravity came, vectored radially outward from the center of the extension

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cage. It pulled them against the walls.

"When my lungs go back to normal, I'll probably go to sleep," said Svetz. "Don't worry about it." Was there something else he ought to tell Wrona? He tried to remember.

Oh, yes. "You can't go home again," said Svetz. "We'd never find this line of history again."

"I want to stay with you," said Wrona.

"All right."

Within a deep recess in the bulk of the time machine, a fog formed. It congealed abruptly—and Svetz's extension cage was back, hours late. The door popped open automatically. But Svetz didn't come out.

They had to pull him out by the shoulders, out of air that smelled of beast and honeysuckle.

"He'll be all right in a minute. Get a filter tent over that other thing," Ra Chen ordered. He stood over Svetz with his arms folded, waiting.

Svetz began breathing.

He opened his eyes.

"All right," said Ra Chen. "What happened?"

Svetz sat up. "Let me think. I went back to preindustrial America. It was all snowed in. I . . . shot a wolf."

"We've got it in a tent. Then what?"

"No. The wolf left. We chased him out." Svetz's eyes went wide. "Wrona!"

Wrona lay on her side in the filter tent. Her fur was thick and rich, white with black markings. She was built something like a wolf, but more compactly, with a big head and a short muzzle and a tightly curled tail. Her eyes were closed. She did not seem to be breathing.

Svetz knelt. "Help me get her out of there! Can't you tell the difference between a wolf and a dog?"

IT'S CORRECT TO CLIP!

Filling in the coupon on the next page offers the following advantages:

1. **Guaranteed monthly delivery to your door of the best in science fiction and fantasy reading.**
2. **Reduced rate—it's cheaper to subscribe than to buy your copies at the newsstand**
3. **An essentially unmarred copy of this issue—the coupon is backed up with this box, and its removal does not affect the text of the surrounding material.**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"No. Why would you bring back a dog, Svetz? We've got dozens of dogs."

Svetz wasn't listening. He pulled away the filter tent and bent over Wrona. "I think she's a dog. More dog than wolf, anyway. People tend to domesticate each other. She's adapted to our line of history. And our brand of air." Svetz looked up at his boss. "Sir, we'll have to junk the old extension cage. It's been veering sideways in time."

"Have you been eating gunchy pills on the job?"

"I'll tell you all about it—"

Wrona opened her eyes. She looked about her in rising panic until she found Svetz. She looked up at him, her golden eyes questioning.

"I'll take care of you. Don't worry," Svetz told her. He scratched her behind the ear, his fingertips deep in soft fur. To Ra Chen he said, "The Vivarium doesn't need any more dogs. She can stay with me."

"Are you crazy, Svetz? You, live with an animal? You hate animals!"

"She saved my life. I won't let anyone put her in a cage," he said determinedly.

"Sure, keep it! Live with it! I don't suppose you plan to pay back the two million commercials she cost us? I thought not." Ra Chen made a disgusted sound. "All right, let's have your report. And keep that thing under control, will you?"

Wrona raised her nose and sniffed at the air. Then she howled. The sound echoed within the Institute, and heads turned in questioning and fear.

Puzzled, Svetz imitated the gesture, and understood.

The air was rich with petrochemicals and oxides of carbon and nitrogen and sulfur. Industrial air, the air Svetz had breathed all his life.

And Svetz hated it.

Mercury Press, Inc., Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753

Enter my subscription to F&SF. I enclose ☐ $7.00 for one year ☐ $12.00 for two years; ☐ $17.00 for three years.

6-1

Please print

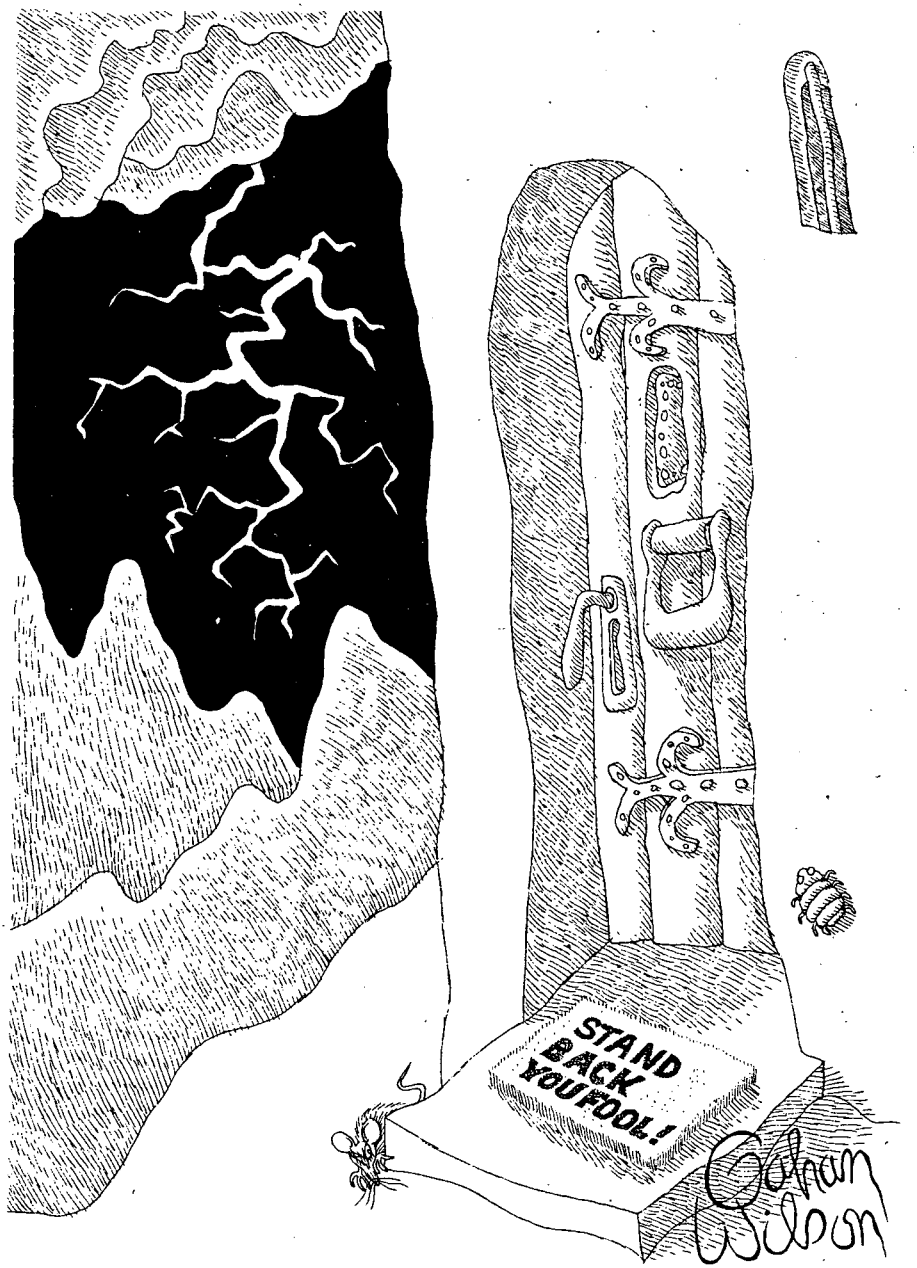
Name .....

Address .....

City .....State.....Zip #.....

Add 50¢ per year for Canada and Mexico; $1.00 for other foreign countries

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

A PRIDE OF MONSTERS by James H. Schmitz (Macmillan, New York, 1970, 248 pp., $4.95)

MUTANTS by Gordon R. Dickson (Macmillan, New York, 1970, 250 pp., $4.95)

ANYWHEN by James Blish (Doubleday, New York, 1970, 168 pp., $4.95)

In the dazzles of light cast off by our current *enfants terribles*—the Zelaznys, Delanys, Moorcocks, Aldisses and Tiptrees—we tend to overlook the steady, dependable craftsmen who, for over twenty years, have merely pleasured us by repeated demonstrations of originality, inventiveness and expertise. We are a fickle people. Not to mention ungrateful.

Three new collections by a trio of our longer established professionals demonstrate the truths and evils of such an unthinking policy, much to our disadvantage.

James Schmitz, whose career spans thirty and more years, has suffered greatest of these three men, and in a singularly deadly indirect way, from the absence of approbation. In A PRIDE OF MONSTERS, one of the new Macmillan single-author "theme" collections, it is painfully obvious that sharper recognition of his not-inconsiderable talents would have prodded Schmitz to move past the point where his work bogged down many years ago. Finding a market that was receptive to a certain style of writing and a predictable level of imaginative effort, Schmitz virtually rewrote the same story five times; and defying all laws of self-recognition (not to mention unwritten laws of editorial perceptivity), Schmitz and Macmillan have gathered all five of those rewrites in what must finally be considered a very sad collection of words.

Solidly unified on the theme of alien "monsters" and their confrontations with humans, these five stories totally lack poetic image to leaven the harshness of pure pulp-fiction style. The pace and structure and internal logic of each is identical, and the solutions to the "problems" posed in each are more often than not offhand, deflating, inspired by *deus ex machina*, and the reason for the story's existence rather than the problem being a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

catalyst for examinations of humans under stress of danger and potential destruction. Because of this transparency of motivation, the greatest single flaw in the stories glares unrelievedly: they are almost totally devoid of characterization. As in "The Searcher." The protagonists are two more of Schmitz's 1930s style archetypes: technologically oriented and/or violence-prone. (Coupled with this is the author's fascination with ludicrous names: Gefty Rammer, Kerim Ruse, Reetal Destone, Danestar Gems—these are seriously offered names for characters in stories that are not satires.)

Putting aside "The Searcher" for a moment and considering "Lion Loose," first of the two longest pieces in the collection, we find a terribly talky, pedestrianly written, "tell-not-show" rendering of the flattened prose of the latter-day pulp idiom. The story fields an improbable plot in which the lone gun goes up against several hundred trained killers and whips them single-handed, and it could as well have been a western story, were we to substitute a cougar on the loose, rather than a *Hlat creature.* (It is what Budrys once labeled the "call a rabbit a *smerp*" story.) In point of fact, the element of "monster" is a hype, a little bogus mystery and terror that is quickly explained away in silly fashion during one of those We've-gathered-all-the-suspects-together-in-this-giant-amphitheater-and-the-murderer-is—scenes straight out of a vintage Charlie Chan film. And, finally, space pirates, *indeed!*

Returning to "The Searcher," the other very long piece, we find a simple gimmick story so similar to "Lion Loose" one wonders how the editors could have allowed a total of 161 (out of a total 248) pages to be devoted to two stories: a) so tediously similar, b) so single-dimensional, c) so badly written, d) so devoid of human values, and e) so offhandedly solved. To be specific, a device used by a radiation-creature to help it find its way through the Pit (an interstellar dust-cloud) gets brought back to the planet Mezmiali and the monster comes after it; the *goyal*, however, is merely an ooga-booga monster and though it chases the Earthmen for 84 pages, with Mr. Schmitz assuring us every gasped breath of the way that the creature is unstoppable, on the eighty-fourth page the two tin-and-pepper protagonists perform a little of that bathtub engineering so dear to the hearts of *Analog* technicians, splicing a wire here and rigging a jerry there, in the closing moments whole-cloth-ing a Hollywood-expedient gimcrack that splatters the poor monster in three lines, poof!

It would be infinitely easier to say, merely, I didn't like this book, and then list the whys, but in "The Winds of Time"—despite the same dumb flaws prevalent in the other stories—Schmitz's talent asserts it-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

self and we abruptly find ourselves sloughing through the colorless prose because we are *fascinated* by the concepts. And because of this, because of these momentary flashes of genuine originality and expertise, we are brought to the sad realization that James Schmitz always *had* this potential for memorable writing. But the markets and editors to whom he chose to submit, and the tendency of his readers to overlook him as a writer capable of growth and change, consigned him finally to a second-rank position so clearly demonstrated by this unfortunate collection; one can only wonder what fine stories were never written . . . because no one demanded of Schmitz that he write them.

Then—as I've said other times, in other places—we have the case of Gordon R. Dickson, for my money the very best *story* teller in our racket.

Dickson appeared first in 1950, yoked to Poul Anderson; and though their styles and subjects are still similar, in many ways Dickson has gone far beyond Anderson. There is always a strong emotional content in Dickson's work; always cerebral, yet not overbearingly so; solidly based in whatever physical or biological science around which the plot revolves; these are *masculine* fictions, these far looks at a Dicksonian universe of the future. In MUTANTS, a twelve-story collection that hits with recurring accuracy the theme of altered (usually super-altered) humanity, Dickson displays himself to advantage. And forces us, once again, to remember that he is one of those unspectacular writers who form the backbone of our genre, setting down with unerring perception and honesty the kinds of stories we inevitably hand to our sf-hating friends, saying, "Here. Try this."

In "Warrior," "Of the People," "By New Hearth Fires" and "Idiot Solvant" there is a sub-theme almost as important as the main tie-thread of the collection: the responsibilities inherent in being *homo superior*, even among other supermen. And in "Home from the Shore" there is a sensitive touching of yet another recurring Dickson preoccupation: pride of place.

So. Dickson. Masculine-oriented, prideful, responsible, cerebral, scientific, emotional. Why, then, is he not constantly referred to when we list our more important practitioners? I submit it is partially oversight on the part of readers, and partially a mundane tone that rings through almost all of Dickson's work. Only in stories like "Dolphin's Way," "Call Him Lord" and (in this volume) "By New Hearth Fires" does he transcend his own inclinations of style and subject. And, of course, in "Black Charlie." The common denominator of all four of these stories is the tug of emotionalism that somewhichway manages to avoid senti-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mentality and strikes to the core of human loneliness and futility.

As firmly based and commendable as this collection is, only in "By New Hearth Fires" (and to far lesser degree in "Warrior" and the much-reprinted "Danger—Human!") does Dickson reach out past his own self-imposed limitations to demonstrate what a sensitive craftsman he is. In "The Immortal" and "Rehabilitated" and "Roofs of Silver" he treats much more intellectually complex ideas, but they seem somehow to lack the fire and purpose of his less galaxy-spanning character studies. Though the work is always of first rank, there is the mundaneness of which I spoke a moment ago; a tendency to deal with the constructs and proved images of the sf idiom. This is the subject matter that dominates Dickson's work, and I suspect in years to come when the final judgments are in on all of us who write in these flux/flow times, it will be the stuff most easily ignored: the space battles, the men at arms, the far travelers remembering Earth, all of it. And it will be Black Charlie and the dolphins and the last dog alive on Earth that will be held up as the reasons why Gordon Dickson should have been more studiously read and criticized when he was at the top of his form. Perhaps the insular critics of sf fandom will note these words and devote a few pages otherwise marked for wizards like Le Guin or Heinlein to one of the worthwhile, underattended toilers in the fantasy fields.

And finally, Blish. Surely the most intellectual and literarily proper of our creators. On the face of it, hardly ignored, yet once more an example of a foundation-solid practitioner in our genre who reaps few of the major awards or lingering critical attention he deserves. As critic and bellwether he has received serious attention (though far more in England than in the States), but with the exception of the Cities in Flight novels and perhaps half a dozen short stories (most notably "Surface Tension," "Testament of Andros" and "We All Die Naked") Jim Blish—a stylist of flawless perceptions and plumbing directness of intellectual concepts—seldom comes in for his true share of huzzahs.

Perhaps it is because of the very rigorousness of his work that so many readers tend to forget his accomplishments. For even as Schmitz tended to block himself off from more exotic literary endeavors, and Dickson breaks through too infrequently into his strongest writing area—emotionalism, so a careful examination of Blish's work indicates a similar hangup. He has become *The Late George Apley* of speculative fiction. His work is proper. It is often priggish; certainly without exception proscribed by logic. And in that respect it is passionless.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In ANYWHEN, a collection of seven excellent stories, it is a lack that leaves a faintly disagreeable taste.

Trying to verbalize how "excellent" stories can be "bad" stories is like trying to explain how a thoroughly evil woman can be utterly fascinating. In a reverse sort of way. But that is precisely the case with Blish. His ideas are fascinating, his command of language is polished and inventive, his science is imaginative and *au courant*, his backgrounds just sufficiently indicated to flesh out the entire world-behind-the-story, his characters intriguing . . . but there is no blood here.

They are cold stories, hewn from ice materials. They remind one of William F. Buckley, and the wholly fascinating way in which he speaks. He knows. One *knows* he knows. Yet even when he wins an argument over a verbal opponent, one tends to go with the loser because he is invariably a man of passion. One distrusts cold, impersonal visions.

I don't want to be unfair to Blish here. I admire his work almost unreasonably, and I consider him a writer none of us can ignore; for even when he fails there are important craft lessons to be learned. But it disheartens and confounds to read such stories as this volume's "A Style in Treason," "How Beautiful with Banners," "None So Blind" and "And Some Were Savages" and know that they are flat constructs without vibrations, without pulse or—dammit, the word persists—passion!

Only in "The Writing of the Rat" and "No Jokes on Mars" is there a snap of human warmth, a click-opening of Blish's humanity, and the stories leap to life. They reach and hold on a gut-level, not only on the cerebrating level where Jim operates so marvelously well *all* the time.

And I do not think it chance that in both of these stories (the best in the book, for me) Jim deals with alien life-forms. In the former, there is a sense of Man being put in his galactic place, learning he is not the end-all and be-all, but receiving at the same time a pat on the head that ennobles. In the latter, with the suddenness of a burst of calcium night light (a reference to Ives that should please Blish, who introduced me to Charles Ives's music many years ago), an otherwise thin and mildly amusing story glows with a sense of humanity and courage that speaks to the condition of Blish's life itself.

ANYWHEN is a book that ranges from this:

There was plenty of time; that was the trouble. People lived too damn long, that was all. Erasing the marks, on the face or in the mind, did not unwind the years; the arrow of entropy pointed forever in the same direction; virginity was a fact, not just a state of membrane or memory. Helen, reawakening in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Aithra's Egyptian bed flensed of her history, might bemuse Menelaus for a while; but there will always be another Paris, and that without delay—time past is eternally time present, as Ezra-Tse had said. ("A Style in Treason")

To this:

And suppose that all these impressions were in fact not extraneous or irrelevant, but did have some import—not just as an abstract puzzle, but to that morsel of displaced life that was Ulla Hillstrom? She was certainly no Freudian—that farrago of poetry and tosh had been passé for so long that it was now hard to understand how anybody, let alone a whole era, had been bemused by it—but it was too late now to rule out the repulsive possibility. No matter how frozen her present world, she could not escape the fact that, from the moment the cloak had captured her, she had been equally ridden by a Sabbat of specifically erotic memories, images, notions, analogies, myths, symbols, and frank physical sensations, all the more obtrusive because they were both inappropriate and disconnected." ("How Beautiful With Banners")

For all its erudition and cleverness, the second selection is what Jim would call prolix and unnecessarily pedagogical fustian.

For all its erudition, the first selection is direct and simply lovely. I submit that it is too much of the latter, and not enough of the former—or of the heart-pull of the Martian dune-cat—that consigns Jim Blish to the role of a writer's writer, but hardly a reader's writer.

It is a sad-making thing, but one apparently impossible to correct. Jim is a staunch advocate of precision in writing, and he can hardly be faulted for that. Yet it would seem—if the Blish canon is examined carefully—that minute attention to syntax and conceptualization can blind one to the needs of the heart.

And speaking of being blinded, it should be pointed out to Doubleday that at $4.95 they are only offering thin volumes of 168 pages while Macmillan, for $4.95, are filling reader's bookshelves with collections of 250 pages. Perhaps someone will point this out.

And perhaps someone will speak up for Schmitz, Dickson and Blish.

—HARLAN ELLISON

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Richard Wilson's work is of uniformly high quality; it appears here less often than we would like, partly because he holds down a full-time job as director of the News Bureau at Syracuse University. His 1968 novelet, "Mother to the World," won an SFWA Nebula award. His latest story may be the most spare, low-key doomsday story you have ever read, but it is no less chilling than the flash of light that arrives before sound or impact.

THE DAY THEY HAD THE WAR

by Richard Wilson

CORPORAL MIKE DURGAN SAID, "Suppose I don't push the furgin button? Then what happens?"

"Court-martial," Sergeant Culligan said. "That's what happens."

"Who'll be around to court-martial me?"

"Somebody, don't worry."

"I don't. That's their worry. Tell me again about this furgin button. I push it and fifty million of the enemy die. Is that right?"

"That's right. I get the signal and I say 'Fire' and you push the button. You saw the orders when we unsealed them."

"Suppose I don't push the button? Do you push it?"

"No. My orders are to say 'Fire.' Then *you* push the button."

"You don't push it if I don't push it?"

"No. I just say 'Fire.' "

"So it's up to me to say whether fifty million people live or get killed? That's a lot of responsibility for a corporal."

"Those are my orders."

"Pretty soft for you. I wipe out fifty million people I never saw before but all you do is say one word.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Suppose I go deaf just then. I have this ear trouble. What do you do? Push the button?"

"No. I report back. I report that the button was pushed or not pushed. Then somebody up there tells me what I do next."

"But you don't push the button all by yourself."

"Not unless somebody tells me to. I'm only a sergeant."

The corporal said, "How about a little game of twenty-one? Give me a chance to get even."

They were playing—the corporal was losing again—when the radio spoke. It said: "Attention to orders, Sergeant Culligan. Stand by."

"Standing by," Sergeant Culligan said. He stood up.

"The next voice you hear will be that of General Neece."

"Yes, sir."

"This is General Neece."

"Yes, sir."

"It's come, Sergeant," the general said. "Is your corporal there?"

"Corporal Durgan. Yes, sir."

"My instructions are to tell you to tell him to fire. When I give the word you will instruct him to fire. I will say one word—'Fire.' Do you understand that, Sergeant?"

"Yes, sir. When you say 'Fire' I say 'Fire' and Corporal Durgan hits the button. Is that right, sir?"

"That's right, Sergeant. Here it comes. 'Fire.'"

Sergeant Culligan said "Fire."

Corporal Durgan put his hands in his pockets.

"Fire," Sergeant Culligan said again.

"I seem to have gone deaf," the corporal said. "I have this trouble with my ears."

Sergeant Culligan sat down and dealt out a king and an ace. He said nothing until the agitated voice of General Neece rang in his ear. "Did you transmit my command, Sergeant?"

"Yes, sir."

"Was it obeyed?"

"No, sir."

There was a brief silence. Then the general said, "We've no time for explanations. These are my orders to you, Sergeant. Hit that button."

There was no response from the sergeant.

The general began to yell.

The corporal said, "The general's yelling at you." The sergeant said to no one in particular: "I seem to have gone deaf."

Everything, everywhere, exploded anyway.

At the central desk of Associated News the slot man was saying, "It's hardly worth our while keeping the wire open. Who'll be around to print what we send?"

One of the men on the rim said, "You got someplace better to be?" He was a man in his late thirties whose wife was in Sun Valley, Idaho, divorcing him. "If you have, go. I'll keep the wire open."

The slot man said, "I'd just as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

soon stay here, I guess. It would help, though, if somebody broke out the office bottle."

Somebody did.

"I don't suppose there's anything on TV?" Ernestine asked her husband, Nat.

"It's all news. You don't want to watch that, do you?"

"I don't need reminding," she said. "Have you tried the educational channel?"

They'd never watched ETV. Whenever they tried it, it had always been somebody giving guitar lessons, or showing how to cook, or to arrange flowers, or talking about Zen or antiques; or else it was a complicated, slow-moving play.

"I'll try it," Nat said. But ETV was like all the others. It had three men sitting on those plastic chairs, discussing.

"We could play records," Nat said. "It's been a long time since we used the hi-fi."

"I don't really want to, but if you do . . ."

"I guess not. Want to take a walk?"

"Where to? No. I don't know what I want."

Nat switched on the little transistor radio they kept in a kitchen drawer. But it was all news, wherever he dialed. "Want to play cards? A little gin rummy?"

"I don't think so. There just doesn't seem to be anything to do." She went to the window and looked at the empty street under the darkening sky. She stood there a long time and when she turned she found her husband at the desk he used mostly for paying bills. "What are you doing?"

"Writing a letter to Clara." She was their daughter.

"She'll never get it."

"I guess not."

"Call her up."

"No. You can try if you like." Clara lived half a continent away. "I don't think you'll get through."

He went on writing as Ernestine tried to place the call. It took her a long time to get the long-distance operator, and when she did she was told that only official calls were being accepted.

Her husband wrote: "Dearest Clara. Just a line to say hello and let you know your mother and I are thinking of you. Mother is trying to call you on the telephone but isn't having any luck. How are you and the children and Kenneth? Will you be able to visit us this summer? There's lots of room at the old homestead now that all the chicks have flown the coop. It's getting dark and I'll have to put on the light soon. There was a flash in the sky just now, but no thunder followed it. I wonder if . . ."

Bill and Bob were in a bar. Bill said, "Bob, did you ever chug-a-lug a bottle of champagne?" and Bob said, "No, I never did. Are you buying?" and Bill said, "Sure, if you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

think you can chug-a-lug it," and Bob said, "Okay, I'm game," and Bill said, "A magnum of champagne for my friend," and when it was opened everybody stood and watched and cheered as Bob chug-a-lugged it all the way down.

Bill paid up and Bob, who now had the hiccups, said, "Bill, did you ever drink six martinis in a row?" and Bill said, "No, I never did, not without stopping, but they'd have to be ice cold and you'd have to buy," and Bob said, "Set them up, bartender, and make them doubles," and the bartender, glad to have such interesting customers, did, and Bill drank them down, one after the other, and Bob, still hiccuping, paid up.

Then Bill, who was trying to control his breathing because if he didn't he'd be sick, said, "Bob, a sure cure for hiccups is an egg in your beer, and because time is short I recommend half a dozen eggs."

And Bob said, "Anything to get rid of these damn hiccups," so Bill gave the instructions and the bartender set up half a dozen glasses of beer and in each glass he floated a raw egg, cracking the shell carefully so the yolk didn't break. And Bob drank them down, one, two, three, hic, four, five, six. And when he had finished, the hiccups were gone.

Bill paid at the rate of 20 cents for each beer and 15 cents for each egg, for a total of two dollars and ten cents.

The bartender told Bill and Bob, "Because you two are such good customers the next round, no matter how outrageous, is on the house."

The eggs seemed to have sobered Bob, as well as having cured his hiccups, and he thought seriously for a moment before he said, "Bartender and Bill, I propose a patriotic libation consisting of your tallest glass which will be filled in order with one-third portions of Cherry Heering—red, cream—white, and burgundy—blue, to be consumed by you, Bill, to the massed voices of the customers singing 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic.'"

It was while Bill, standing to the singing, threw his head back to consume the concoction that the bomb burst in the street and shattered the plate glass window and sent a shard flying horizontally, which decapitated Bill before he had touched a drop of the patriotic drink. Everybody else died soon after that.

A man was counting his blessings. He'd had a good life, no denying that. He'd had two wives, two children by each. Come to think of it, his first wife had had two husbands, two children by each; and her first husband had had two wives, two children by each; and his second wife, Marie, had had two husbands, two children by each. He could not recall at the moment how many children were living with, or were in the custody of, or were visiting

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

him and Marie at this time.

Anyhow, not counting other wives or other people's wives, he now had two houses (some of the children were with Marie at the lake house), two cars (not counting the children's) and two telephones (not counting the one at the lake house or the one in the car he used for business).

In the house in the city he had two bathrooms, not counting the two half-baths in the basement and attic, two television sets, two hi-fis, and two dogs. The dogs were up at the lake and he was alone in the town house.

He had subscriptions to two book clubs and memberships in two country clubs. He had two fireplaces, one in the living room and one in the big den below.

For some time now he'd had two jobs, one as senior partner in his engineering firm and another as consultant to similar firms in other countries. He had traveled a lot and was perhaps more aware than the average citizen of the war clouds that were gathering.

Marie had everything she could wish for. Besides her children and her pets and her husband (and perhaps a lover; he was never quite sure about that), she had a washer, a dryer and a dishwasher; an electric can opener and a garbage disposal; four vacuum cleaners, one for each floor of their town house; two lawn mowers (she enjoyed cutting the grass herself, first with the gasoline-powered rider mower and then trimming up with the electric machine); and a snow-blower. She had a freezer and two refrigerators, the second in the basement to hold the overflow of soda pop and snacks the kids were always consuming. She had a rotisserie, a sewing machine, an exerciser, a blender, a mixer, an electric meat slicer, and an electric carving knife.

She had a laundry chute down which dirty clothes could be tossed from any floor of the house, and just lately her husband had installed beside it an electric dumbwaiter which saved her having to carry the clean clothes back up.

He had provided her with all the big and little luxuries he or she could think of. They could afford them now, so why not have them? They had deprived themselves long enough in the early years of their marriage, when he had been a junior partner, struggling up through the firm without the prerogative of doing consulting work. Those were the years, too, when the alimony payments to his first wife had been stiff and the support payments for their children stiffer still. His ex-wife had remarried, ending the alimony, at about the same time he became a senior partner and doubled his salary; and his first set of children finished college and went out into the world. Almost overnight his status had changed from that of a well-to-do pauper, burdened with debt, to that of a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

very rich man—richer, at least, than 98 percent of the rest of the world.

Now he and Marie were enjoying life, or so he told himself. It was sweet to savor it, and again he thought about their long list of possessions.

The two boats; he'd forgotten about them. One at the lake, the other at the marina, being refitted.

Their shares in American industry. His prudent investments and Marie's inheritance from her father added up to a very respectable portfolio. It was true they also had some non-American and perhaps un-American investments. He had bought stock in that Oriental firm which was reported to be selling crucial materials to that big unfriendly Asian power. He had also been a consultant for that firm. Wouldn't it be ironic if the war clouds which hovered over the world today were partly of his own seeding?

He pushed the thought away. Suddenly he felt like having a drink. And a cigarette. And maybe even some of those high-cholesterol foods he'd been avoiding along with alcohol and tobacco.

Whiskey withered your liver, or was it your kidneys? Cigarettes caused cancer or emphysema. Rich foods fatted up your blood vessels and led to heart attacks.

Well, he'd been good a long time. He poured himself a drink from his well-stocked cupboard. Although he'd not touched it in many years, he kept it on hand for Marie and for guests.

Half a dozen cigarettes remained in a pack on the coffee table; Marie had taken the full packs to the lake. He went down to the basement freezer and took out a carton. While he was there he rummaged through the frost and came up with a gourmet dinner of formidable richness.

He put it in the oven and made himself a second drink and smoked a third cigarette.

Funny, though, the cigarette tasted awful and bothered his throat and the liquor had made him dizzy. He'd also lost his appetite.

He put out the cigarette by dipping it into his drink. He took the glass to the kitchen and dumped it down the drain in the sink. He was on the way to the oven to turn it off when the first bomb fell.

He didn't hear the others.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Samuel R. Delany, who has won several awards for his short stories and novels, and James Sallis, one-time editor of the British magazine New Worlds, *both have well-deserved reputations as innovators in the sf field. Their collaboration turns out to be an adventure in the tradition of heroic fantasy, a genre not noted for any great upheaval or change, and this is something of a surprise. What is not surprising is that they bring to it an uncommon freshness, depth and relevance.*

THEY FLY AT CIRON

by Samuel R. Delany and James Sallis

I

"THEY ARE DOGS!"

"But—"

"No. Less than dogs! Look: they go on their belly like worms!"

"Nactor. My Prince..." *(It's when your own words lurch in your throat and choke you. When every word you hurl bounces away from those glass-green eyes without a single spark catching.)* "They are men who fought bravely against us—"

"Whom we vanquished! Which gives me the right to do as I wish. Even that." And his jeweled hand almost touched the wire.

(It's when you speak and ask yourself, again and again, Does he understand the words, the words I'm saying? Can he hear? The words.)

"Yours is also the right to be merciful."

(When finally you seek to provoke him to anger and his red lips smile.)

"Is it, Handsman Kire? Is it indeed?" Slowly he took the powergun from its sling and pointed it through the wire.

The first time he fired, the two who could still scream began again. The others, those capable of movement, dragged themselves across the dirt toward him, took hold of the wire and tried to pull themselves up. Their fingers caught in the wire, blood coming out the tips. They opened their torn mouths again and again, silently.

The barrel of the powergun jumped in the sunlight with each retort. He shot the screaming ones

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

last, minutes apart, and the gun barrel split on the last shot.

"I suppose it's worth doing, just to keep you quiet, Kire." He looked down at the gun, its barrel bulging and rough at the base. "Pity," he said. "That was a good barrel."

(It's when the weave of your cloak between thumb and knuckle burns, and there are no words left.)

The Prince replaced the ruined gun in its sling. The black leather was worked with the design of Kirke, the totemic crow of Myetra, in silver. Silver, like the guns, they could not produce themselves; both were the products of a nation which Myetra had conquered, a nation now kept in constant labor to supply Myetra's ever-increasing troops. For the guns and silver, they were given wheat which Myetra took from yet another conquered nation. Even the crow belonged to others, to a small village which Myetra had long ago destroyed.

"Handsman Kire, it should not be necessary to remind you that the purpose of this expedition is conquest—that Myetra must expand His boundaries, else He will perish. When the moons are full, and orange, when the time comes for our final encounter with Calvicon, you will . . . I *trust* you will distinguish yourself in war, in service to Myetra, thereby bringing honor to the colors you wear. *And* the position those colors have brought you."

He paused, lips parted, his tongue black behind them.

"War, Kire? War is when you strike your enemy, burn his houses, kill his women as he watches, then spill his own blood. Slowly, Kire. Slowly, so that he realizes the greatness of Myetra. To each nation is given a specific genius, by which that nation will govern itself, and the genius of Myetra is for war. It is destiny that Myetra should rule. There is no other way."

The Prince ran a thumbnail down one side of his braided beard, then the other.

"Those who disagree, Kire, those who think there is another way, are the enemies of Myetra." He nodded toward the wire corral. "You have seen the mercy of Myetra for its enemies." And he turned abruptly into his tent, leaving Kire in the shadow of the riggings.

The tall Handsman hesitated a moment, then turned and walked toward the troop fires. His men sat clustered around the steady, green-burning fires (for the soil here was rich in that metal used by the Arhites to fashion cooking vessels)—working at their weapons, drinking and talking over the day's march, armor stacked beside each man and gleaming a dull gray in the light of the fires.

"Brave Kire! Come and drink!"

"Handsman, a bowl was saved for you—"

"Kire—"

The horses, being virtually irreplaceable, were kept in a small,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

carefully guarded clearing at the center of the camp. The two sentries turned and crossed staffs as Kire approached, then saw the expression on his face and drew aside to let him pass. A boy with a scar over one eye came running toward him out of a tiny lean-to alongside the horses. This was Kire's groom, and wore the Handsman's cast-off clothing, according to custom.

"Your mount, My Lord Kin—"

But Kire pulled out the thick-flanked horse and swung onto its back, stroking the braided mane again and again as they leapt forward out of the camp.

"I shall return before we decamp for Ciron," he called back to the boy.

Wind slapped at his face and filled the black cape. Shod hooves began kicking dirt, soon crackled in the furze and snapped low foliage. The land spun back beneath him.

Like many soldiers who went under the silver crow, Kire was not of Myetra by birth. His home was Liqt, a small settlement on the fringe of that territory now under the domination of Myetra, near the sea. Their songs recounted how the people of Liqt came there in miraculous, legendary vehicles from an almost forgotten land across the sea—vessels which, it was said, could move indefinitely upon the surface of the water. The journey had taken many, many years, and untold lives. But children had been born aboard these vessels, and Kire's father was of that new generation.

The people of Liqt had, according to their songs (those old enough to remember, denied this), been expelled from their original home. They were a military people, and the time came when they were no longer an essential part of their society, which had remained at peace for several score years, and in fact they fell into disfavor. They were given a choice: change their entire way of life, no longer supportable, or be put to sea and banished. They could not, was the response, change. And so left forever those nations. But in the years between the time they departed with little hope that there might actually be other lands (the elders who banished them assumed there were not), and their arrival here, these people had been transformed.

Perhaps it was the shock of dislocation, of leaving their home and its customs, or perhaps the rigors and the challenge of their crossing, or the influence of a younger generation whose only knowledge of tradition was the lessons given them; at any event, Liqt became a peaceful village, avoiding all contact with others (from which the color of their hair, the set of their faces, and their height set them apart)—rehearsing by ritual the forms of advanced warfare which were their sole heritage, but never employing them. They learned to accept the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

many gifts of the sea, to cultivate grain in the rich, damp soil of nearby hills. This continued for years—until Myetra, then a young nation, discovered them and discovered, also, their talents for war. Liqt was occupied, its people forced to train the Myetrans and finally given another choice: to become a part of the Myetran forces, or perish.

To the younger among them it seemed, as the first choice had seemed to their parents and grandparents, hardly a choice at all. They were restless, ambitious, dissatisfied with village life, and they had learned from the Myetran soldiers to take renewed interest in the heritage rejected by their parents. They joined with Myetra.

Kire was of the greatest of Liqt's military families and was given high position. And so he rode, and fought, alongside the soldiers of Myetra, constantly reminded that he fought not only for his own honor, and that of his family, but for the honor of all Liqt as well. What was never spoken to Kire, what he knew without benefit of words, was that if he and his compatriots failed, Liqt would be mercilessly burned to the ground. And what Kire never spoke to himself (and this, he was just coming to know) was that he was not, like the others, a soldier, however well he acquitted himself in battle. For Liqt's genius was in the truest sense practical: technical, not passionate—a triumph of technique without true interest or real content. The passion, the desire, whatever spirit had once made Liqt's people great warriors, was gone now as surely as those legendary sea vessels.

Dim and white in the distance, the Cironian mountains lipped the horizon. Kire turned his horse into a copse of low trees, and leaves brushed against his face. All was quiet, and he found himself listening with concentration to the hiss of bushes and young limbs swinging back into place behind him. At a stream he jabbed his heels in gently beneath him; an instant later, hooves struck the rockier shore, scattering pebbles down into the water.

He mounted a small rise and halted there a moment, bending to run his hand along the horse's neck, mane jumping against his wrist, moving through his fingers. As he was about to plunge down into the trees, a shrill scream made the horse rear. Kire reined in hard and tightened his legs around the horse's sides.

The scream, raucous, cutting, came again. This time the horse merely danced back a step.

Kire dismounted, dropped the halter and went down the hill, sliding and leaping. As he came around a boulder, the scream was repeated a third time, very close.

Kire stared.

A man and a beast: yellow claws

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

slashed at bronze shoulders. A head ducked—turning—black hair flying about it. The bodies locked and a bare foot braced in the ground, sliding and raking out long gouges. Then fangs snapping toward a wrist that moves too quickly—lashes around behind the animal's neck. And it screams once as something cracks inside it.

A bristling paw landed on the man's side, but the scream had ceased, the claws retracted.

Kire breathed again as animal and man, one dead, one exhausted, fell to the earth. The breath was not completed: a shadow fell over him, drifting across the ground toward the fallen pair. Unaware what was above, the man raised himself on one arm and shook his head.

Kire ran to him, grabbed his shoulder, looked up. The flying thing—sun behind it burned on the edges of its wings; he could see only its tremendous size—dropped. Kire moved his hand and the gun's retort rolled into the air almost before he cleared the sling.

It averted itself, membranous wings glinting like chipped rose quartz—then flapped into the air and soared away. At his feet the naked man kneeled by the puma. "It's gone now," Kire said. "Get up."

The man pushed himself to his feet and stood. He was taller than Kire by a handbreath. A good six years younger as well, the officer realized, looking at the broad face. Not more than twenty or twenty-one.

Swinging his cape over his arm, Kire pushed the gun (the barrel had held) back into its sling. "Who are you?" he asked.

"Rahm of Ciron," the young man answered, smiling. He spoke in a dialect not unlike that of Myetra itself. "And I would thank thee for frightening off the Winged One with thy—" He motioned toward Kire's belt.

"My powergun."

The Cironian's smile opened on white teeth. "That is a gun? I think to have known the word spoken. They are indeed frightening." He tossed his hair back over one shoulder. "And who art thou, that has become Rahm's friend?"

"I am called Kire." He did not give his origin, though with the black cape and its crow there was likely no need.

"Thou art a stranger here," Rahm said. "Where go you?"

"Soon to the foot of the Cironian mountains, where duty takes me. But now I wander, to learn of your country."

"I too return to Ciron." The youth lifted the slain puma by one paw and examined its belly with his foot. "You may have the beast," he said, "for saving me from the Winged One. I would to carry him home; but he is thine."

Kire felt his own mouth give way to a smile. "Thank you." He leaned against the boulder, glanced up at

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the sky, then back. "Rahm. How is it that you travel this land naked and without weapon?"

The young man shrugged. "It is warm. My skin is tough." Here he frowned. "A weapon . . . ?"

"You don't know what a weapon is."

Rahm shook his head.

"And suppose you could not have killed the puma with your hands. What then?"

"She would have killed me." The youth laughed. "But that could not happen. I am stronger than any animal in this land—except, it might be, the Winged Ones."

"And what are they?"

"They live in the mountains of Ciron," Rahm told him, shrugging once more, "far up in the rocks and caves."

"And you live at the mountain's foot?"

Rahm nodded, and Kire stood for a moment staring into his face.

"Do all Cironians go about so?" he finally said. "Are you all so peaceful? —Or perhaps you are just simple-minded."

"We are peaceful, yes," Rahm answered. "We have no guns, if this is what you intend. And many of us go naked, though not all. But thou art the first ever to think me simple-minded."

Kire shook his head. "Where do you come from now, Cironian? Who are your parents; how do you live?"

"I come from a week's wandering. It is the custom of our village that each person so wander, every three years. My parents are dead. I live with the village gravedigger. I work in the grain fields."

"Those muscles are from lifting hoes and pushing plows?"

Rahm raised his arm and made an indifferent fist. "Some, yes. I always take a prize at the village games in wrestling. And much of this came from the year I hauled stone from the quarry for our new council building."

"And you don't even know what a weapon is. . . ." Then Kire wheeled, black cloak billowing. The horse raised its head as he approached; he took the reins and vaulted onto its back.

"Friend Kire!" the Cironian called after him. "The puma! Thou wilt go without my present?"

The horse reared and turned. "I do not forget." He guided the horse down the slope while Rahm hoisted the carcass with strong hands.

The horse shied once at the dead thing, but Kire grabbed a handful of mane and dragged the limp shape across the back in front of him, balancing it there. He leaned down to place his hand on the young man's shoulder.

"I will not forget your present. And I hope that you will never regret its giving."

Hooves beat rough earth, Rahm leapt back, the cloak whipped—as Kire of Myetra reached the hilltop and disappeared down the far side,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

leaving the Cironian puzzled at his parting words.

II

Rahm paused before the first grain fields, filling his chest with the rich air. A distant plower looked up from his blade and waved. Walking along the field's edge, Rahm waved back, then stood for a moment watching. The earth, reclaimed by his people from rocky waste, was soft to his bare feet; and as he continued on the path, moist soil gave and sprang back beneath his soles.

At the stone well a woman with a clay jug on her hip called to him, and he grinned back.

Four children careened, laughing, from the steps of a hut. A dog yipped after them, and as they broke around Rahm, he caught up the smallest of the girls and swung her to his shoulders. The others jumped up and down clapping. The girl shrieked happily while her tiny hands grappled in his hair and, when at last he set her down, tugged at his finger for another ride, but he laughed and freed himself.

An old woman, breasts like leather flaps, had carried her loom outside. A breeze tugged at the ends of the bright rag around her head and pulled the hem of her skirt away from thin ankles. When she saw Rahm, her lips parted over sparse teeth; and he paused to admire the small blue stones glinting like eggs in the thickening web of green and red woolen threads.

"Perhaps I will make something pretty for you," she chuckled, then slammed the heavy treadle down again: the bone shuttle ran through quivering strands. Rahm patted her shoulder and went on.

Across the square a cart creaked toward him from a dusty street. A broad beast lugged it forward with lowered horns. Slats woven with leather formed its sides, and it was piled with stone. The drivers, man and boy, were grey from head to foot. Kern, his hair and beard powdered with stone dust, raised an arm to hail him. Then the boy who held the halter recognized him too and stood in the cart. "Hey, Rahm!" he cried. Beneath the dust his plaited hair was red.

"So," Kern said, leaning down to place his hand on Rahm's neck as the youth came abreast the cart. "Thou art returned, after all. There were those who said thou would not."

The boy jumped down and grabbed Rahm's wrist with dusty hands. "Thou wilt work again with us in the stone pits, Rahm?"

He shook his head. "No, Abrid, I will stay in the fields."

Then water splashed them and the three whirled together.

A girl stood on the porch of a nearby house, laughing. Her hair was the same rich red as her brother's, and she wore a single length of green cloth wrapped

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

twice about her and fastened over one shoulder with a small white sea shell. Her pitcher was now half empty.

"Kern, Abrid, come in and get your lunches. I—" Then she recognized Rahm and came running down the steps. "Thou art come home again! —Eat with us then. There is more than enough." She looked back at the shattered pitcher on the step where she had dropped it and laughed. Abrid went over and scooped water out of one of the shards, rubbing a small, clean mask around his eyes and smearing what was left on his mouth.

"No, Rimgia," Rahm said. "I have not yet spoken to Ienber, and must see him first."

"Well, then, come thou soon," Kern called after him as Rahm turned and began to walk on through the village. Soon the sun would go behind the mountains, throwing shadows onto the houses, into the streets; but now it was warm and pleasant. As Rahm neared the graveyard—the tombs were unmarked, but Ienber knew the name of each man, woman, child, and where each one lay—a girl crossed the road and came up the gentle slope toward him.

Her hair was the color of bronze. A leather mantle over her shoulder was pushed back from her breasts, and a chain of shells held her cloth skirt low on her hips. Strapped over one shoulder was a harp.

"Rahm!" she hailed him. "So you're back! You too are going to Ienber? I have just come from helping Rimgia in the fields."

"I saw her a moment past," he said, "with her father and brother."

"And in your journeys, what did you see?" She fell in beside him. "It is this, which I want to hear."

Rahm looked at the ground. "Naä, thou makest fun of me."

Surprised, the girl stepped back. "What do you mean, make fun?"

"Thou, that hast traveled all the world, asketh me what I have seen in a single week's wandering?"

"Oh, Rahm, of course I was not making fun of you. I am truly interested."

"But thou hast come all the way from Calvicon with thy songs and tales. What can I have seen that thou hast not seen, Naä?"

"Oh, come on, Rahm, tell me."

Then he laughed. "But see, I make fun of thee."

"Then, what? You must tell me. We'll go to Ienber together."

"I saw many people who lived much like ourselves, Naä. I watched antelope come to shallow waterholes at dawn. And this morning I fought a puma and killed it with my hands, for it would have done me injury."

Naä shook her head. "Your people amaze me."

He looked at her and smiled.

"Two months ago when I first came here, I would never have believed that such a people could exist." She paused a moment. "Still,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I do not know that I believe it."

"But why, Naä?"

"Rahm, you know that I have traveled much, to many lands. I know songs from more places than you could imagine to exist, but most of them are about fights, and wars, love that dies, betrayal, death and revenge. Yet here there is . . ." She raised her shoulders; let them fall. "I can't even name it. Here, I go out and help in the fields; I come and exchange songs with Ienber or talk to the old women at their shuttles; I eat with you in the evening or take long walks alone in the foothills of the mountains; all your women are like sisters to me, your men like brothers." She glanced once at him, looked away. "You are all so happy to listen to me sing, and I have never sung better. The only thing to be wary of is those strange flying creatures, those you call the Winged Ones—and no one here seems to have seen more, really, than a silhouette against the clouds. I can remember a few times, when I was a child, like that. But not for many years now . . . until I came here." She looked down at her feet moving on the soft earth. "It's beautiful here, Rahm. So beautiful that if I were anywhere else and tried to sing of this beauty, I know the notes would stick in my throat, the words want to stay on my tongue, and I would start to cry."

They had reached the grassy stretch of graves and now stopped to gaze around at the bare stones. "Yes," Rahm said after a moment. "Thou art right, Naä."

After they fell to walking again, the girl said, "So, you have brought a puma with you. Ienber will be pleased to have more claws for his necklace."

"I did not bring it back," Rahm said, "but gave it to a friend."

"To someone in the village before you showed it to Ienber? Rahm, that is the first thing you have ever done which surprised me."

"Not a friend in the village. This was a man who helped me in my journey. As I fought the cat, a Winged One flew close, and this man frightened it away with a powergun."

The girl swung about to stare at him. "A powergun? Only Myetra uses powerguns; I have seen but a few in Calvicon and none here beneath the mountains. Where was this man from?"

Rahm thought a while. "I remember only that he wore a black cape with a crow, and rode a black horse. His name was Kire and I—"

"Myetra," Naä said. Her face clouded.

"It is true that he may have been from Myetra, but why dost thou look so strangely at this?"

"Rahm, the black cape is the uniform of the Myetran armies. What would one of their soldiers be doing here, and so close that you could leave him in the morning and be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ıere by noon?" She paused, consid-
ring. "Were there others with
ım?"

"I saw but the one, alone. He said
hat he wandered also, to see our
and."

"—And with a powergun. That
annot be good at all."

"But why, Naä? They hold no
omplaint against us; we do not
ven know these people."

"Calvicon has known them," she
aid. "And what they know is not
ood . . . we must tell Ienber, at
ny rate."

They had reached the center of
he field.

"If we can now find him," Rahm
aid, looking about. He cupped his
ands and shouted: "Ienber, I am
ere. Where art thou?"

A door in the board wall between
wo trees flew open and a figure
urched out. White hair and beard
utted out in a dozen braids.
'Rahm!" he shouted, and began to
un across the field. At his neck
angled six or seven strands of
eather set with assorted animal
eeth. His long arms were heavy
vith bracelets of copper, and at his
vaist a tooled-leather apron was set
vith small metal shields worked
vith symbols and designs. Metal
lso encircled his ankle above a
kinny foot; two huge hoops of
rass hung from his ears, distending
ierced lobes.

He threw his clinking arms about
Rahm, stepped back, then em-
raced him once more. "My son,"
he said, voice cracking. "Thou hast
come safely from thy wandering."
Turning to Naä, he seized her
wrists. "And thou hast come too,
like my own daughter, to sing and
play for me. It is good to see thee
on this fine day."

"It is always good to see Ienber,"
she said, "even as it is good now to
have Rahm again with us."

"Come, both of you," Ienber
said. "Well, my son, what have you
seen, where have you been?"

Inside the hut they sat while Ien-
ber heated broth. The shelves were
stacked with bones and scrolls of
parchment, bits of uncut stone,
painted lengths of wood, dried liz-
ards, stuffed bats and mice. To an-
other it might have seemed strange,
but here had been Rahm's home
since his parents died in a rock fall
at the quarry. He could scarcely
walk at the time; he was that
young. Ienber had carried him out
to the pits to see where it hap-
pened, then brought him back here,
to live.

Ienber broke a small bone and
tapped the marrow out into the
broth. He served Rahm and Naä
steaming bowls, filled a third for
himself. Rahm began to tell of his
adventures, and when he reached
the part about his encounter that
morning with the Myetran soldier,
the old man's face wrinkled and he
placed his bowl on the stone hearth
at his feet.

In response, Rahm's own brow
lowered. "Why art thou and Naä so

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

concerned about these Myetrans?"

Ienber grunted. "This is not the first time they have been here, boy. When they came before, it was not good for the Cironians. I was young then and their armies passed through to fight Calvicon. They had no interest in us, but still they ruined many of our fields, made loose with our food and homes as if they were their own, and their soldiers killed two of our men who tried to resist. And then, they did not have these powerguns."

"If they come again," Rahm said, "then we must keep out of their way—but this did not seem a brutal man. He saved me from the Winged One and spoke to me as a friend."

"That is a good sign, I suppose. Naä, dost thou think the forces of Myetra have come to attack Calvicon?"

The singer shook her head. "I don't know, Ienber. But I would not think so: the last great clash between Calvicon and Myetra brought great loss to each, and ended in a draw."

"But the powerguns—"

"Let us hope they do not have many, nor greater weapons with them."

Ienber nodded. "Powerguns are mighty, but little things with which to attack Calvicon."

"Then what will they use them for?" asked Rahm.

The old man shrugged. "Perhaps it is after all but a lone soldier, wandering through this country. There may be nothing to fear." He picked up his bowl and held it in one hand, staring into the fire.

"That is what I think to be true," Rahm said after a moment.

"I hope so," Naä said, less confidently. Then she swung the harp to her lap and began to pluck at the strings.

III

Rahm slept deeply, one hand low on his belly, lids letting white crescents show between black lashes. The air outside the shack cooled; a light rain fell, then stopped, and the moon's curve smiled.

A thin sound pierced his sleep like a pin.

It grew until all at once sleep was ripped apart—and Rahm sat upright, clutching at his ears. Ienber leaned against the fireplace, shaking, his mouth open in terror. The clinking of his bracelets was lost as the sound resumed.

Rahm lurched to his feet and ran to the door. The sound came from across the village. As he stepped outside it became a booming voice.

SURRENDER PEOPLE OF CIRON
SURRENDER TO THE FORCES OF
MYETRA

The silence came to stinging ears. He tried to blink the water back out of his eyes. Then the wailing began again, and anticipating pain, he drew back as once more the voice churned in the darkness.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

PEOPLE OF CIRON SURRENDER
SURRENDER TO THE FORCES OF
MYETRA

Behind him, Ienber was crying. Rahm dashed out onto the path, shaking his head in an effort to clear it, to throw off the pain and the steady high hum that drowned all else. Black leaves pulled away and the lights of the village flickered before him. As he passed the first house, he heard distraught voices. He was certain that none of his kinsmen still slept.

A streak of light flared on the sky to the east. Then another. And another. Three fans of light played on the dark, then lowered till they struck blindingly among the houses.

His first, panicked thought was that the dwellings would burst into flame under the glare. But apparently the lights were simply for illumination, and terror.

Rahm's hearing had almost returned to normal.

In the east were drums.

He neared the square where men and women had already gathered. As he came along the sidestreet, someone spun him by the arm and hissed his name, then, "Where is Ienber?"

Bewildered, he staggered back.

"For God's sake, Rahm! Where is Ienber?"

"Naä?" At last he recognized the singer's voice. "He's . . . at the graveyard."

"Rahm. We must all leave. Immediately!"

"Leave? But why?"

"Because it is Myetra that comes. Did you not hear? They want us to surrender."

"I heard. Naä, what is this 'surrender'?"

"Oh, Rahm!" she cried. And suddenly she was running away into the darkness.

Puzzled, he turned back to the gathering in the square. A few people were still digging at their ears. The drums were louder. Another of the lights struck from the eastern meadows. Something—a long line of something—was coming toward the town. The sweeping light threw long shadows over the grain that bent in the night breeze.

The people looked at one another.

"Why do they come across the field? They will ruin the grain."

"There are so many of them that they could not fit on the roads."

"Such late-come visitors, and so many. Will we have food for all of them? They walk so strangely."

Grain stalks snapped under boots in time to the drums. Black cloaks waved behind, aping the night. The footmen were flanked on either side by mounted figures astride nervous horses. The searchlights rolled on high moving towers.

They waited in the square.

The soldiers had marched to the edge of the field. The plaza was fully lit now; the villagers squinted against the light. One man on a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

horse barked into a silver rod in his hand.

HALT

The word echoed from black horns high on the light towers. The men in black capes stopped; the drums stilled.

The one with the silver rod rode forward and the villagers fell back. He spoke again, and again his voice rumbled from the speakers.

SURRENDER TO THE FORCES OF MYETRA

They exchanged bewildered glances, and at last Kern the quaryman stepped out.

"Welcome to thee, visitors in the night," he said, a little uncertainly.

"Are you the leader here?" demanded the mounted officer.

"I speak for all the people here," Kern assured him.

"Then you are a leader." The officer drew his gun and flame shot into Kern's shoulder.

Rahm had seen a powergun once before, but not what it could do. Kern's blood spurted a dozen feet and the flesh hissed and bubbled as the gun jerked up from the retort. "Now do you surrender?" Kern's hand was still moving on the ground, the fingers opening and closingasthoughtotakeholdof something within the hand. He had no face. "Your leader has been killed. So will you all be if you do not surrender."

The villagers drew together, huddling in shock as terror began to crystallize.

Suddenly the officer spun in his saddle and cried out to his troops.

"They will not surrender. Attack!"

IV

When what happened next stopped happening, Rahm lay in the rocky woods at the mountain's foot, his head on his forearm, tears streaming onto the back of his hand. Breath jerked into his lungs every half minute.

He remembered walking backwards screaming.

He remembered slipping with his feet in blood.

He remembered crockery smashed under horses' hooves, and the gravefield shack in flames.

Ienber calling, crying, trying to get out past the streaming fire from the muzzles. . . .

Then something had happened to him, not a part of the outside chaos—something in his hands, his thighs, his belly.

He saw a black-cloaked figure crouching over Rimgia and, howling, he rushed forward. His hands locked on the neck. He squeezed, he pulled, he sobbed, he twisted. He dragged the flailing figure halfway through the town, until it no longer struggled, and was still. Horse hooves, grunts, a scream torn from inside himself. He dropped the corpse and fled—till much later he dropped among the trees on the foothills.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He lay in the leaves, gasping, eyes broiling, teeth clenched. At last his mind grew still, and his body ceased shaking, and he slept.

Dawn struck him awake with gold. He rolled and stood in one motion, blinking rapidly to erase unbearable dreams. He turned, looked down the slope, then to the side, and finally started upward, stopping occasionally to shake his head.

The trees thinned, and as he stumbled over the higher rocks, cliffs jutted about him or crumbled away in uncertain handholds. After a while he rounded a corner into a recessed chimney. The mouth of a cave, nearly twenty feet high, stood before him.

He heard a flapping, as of a single wing.

Rahm stared at the opening. Beyond hung something grey. He eased around the ledge and tried to peer more deeply into the cave. All sense of danger had left him; his only motivation was passive curiosity.

A fallen branch twisted on the rock. Light reflected on one broken side. Like metal. Like polished muzzles gleaming in fire—

He grasped the stick, as if seizing the reality would stop the recalled terror. He moved forward, narrowed his eyes and looked up. A hole in the roof, and a thin beam of light that hit the shape of something alive, something high, near the cave's roof. It moved, moved again, shook itself, moved back.

Rahm stepped into the entrance and made a barking sound.

A thin mew returned.

Whatever it was, it was not about to come at him. He took another step. The flapping sounded again.

A kite shape hung in a great mass of grey filament—Rahm's eyes quickly became accustomed to the darkness—with one wing free. A jungle of this webbing filled the cavity. Rahm stepped forward and his foot struck a bone that chuckled on the rock. Slowly he raised the stick at the trapped creature. He had not yet touched it, but suddenly the mew turned into a warning screech.

Rahm whirled.

Suspended nearly four feet from the ground, a bulbous shadow swayed at the entrance, then scuttled across the rock. It paused, hissed, danced on spindly legs. Rahm jabbed his stick toward it: mandibles clicked and missed. It ran up the wall, then leapt forward. Rahm struck at it again and felt the stick make contact. The thing landed spitting and hopped away, injured leg aloft. Behind it trailed a grey thread.

It jumped and Rahm swung.

It vaulted back and Rahm struck again.

Two more threads strung across the cave.

As he whirled once more a fiber clung to his shoulder and, straining, he realized how powerful the adhe-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sive was. His shoulder stung.

The next blow caught it full on the body, and it collapsed out of the arc of its leap. It landed on its back, legs pedaling. Rahm rushed forward, thrust his stave through the crunching belly. Eight legs closed around the stick: it hissed, spat. Then the hairy stalks fell open, two of them brushing Rahm's leg.

He stepped back, breathing hard.

Blood trickled across the stone then, as the creature convulsed a final time, gushed. As it reached the place where one of the strands was anchored to the floor, Rahm watched: when blood touched the filament, it began to stream, and momentarily the strand fell away.

He looked from the thing trapped in the web to the carcass on the rock, then back, and after a slight pause grabbed a bristly leg, dragging it behind him. With drops of blood he meticulously worked through the strands. As he finished and the trapped creature swung lower, a voice called out: "Have care!"

Rahm looked up.

The voice came from within the web.

"I said, have care!"

The voice was high, and Rahm's ears rang from it.

"Thou?" he said. "Thou speakest?"

"Yea, though we have never known groundlings to utter words."

"Thou, Winged One, hast a tongue?"

"It would seem that we both do. But hold me now before I drop."

Rahm caught the wing in his bloody hand, severed the final cord, then helped the creature ease itself to the ground and remove the fibers which clung to its body.

"The blood dissolves the ropes, yet will not harm thee," Rahm said. "Now we will find water to wash away this blood."

A head shorter than the Cironian, the creature was nearly twice as broad in the chest, with squat, thick legs. The long prehensile feet had developed an opposable toe. The arms were triple Rahm's in length, with sinuous muscles from which a leathery membrane folded down over three fingers longer than a man's arm. At the point of the wings were an elongated free thumb and forefinger.

His face was demon-like, with thin brown hair, small eyes and huge ears; and when he grinned, his teeth were tiny and close set.

"How are you called, groundling?"

"My name is Rahm. And thine?"

"Votcir," the winged man said, tilting his head.

"How wert thou trapped by this beast?"

Votcir cocked his head the other way and drew his wings about him. An embarrassed grin touched his lipless mouth. "I was careless and fled into this cave in the night, unaware that the danger here was greater than that I fled."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"And what danger didst thou flee?"

Votcir wrinkled his face. "In the night a great wailing came to deafen us. It filled us with panic and we scattered from our nests, blundering low among the trees, unable to find our way—I saw many of my people fall to the terrible wailing. I could hear the echo from this cave and flew here, thinking the sound would be less. But I flew into the web and have been awaiting the creature's return since that time." Votcir paused. "But you arrived first . . . how is it that you are here, groundling Rahm? Never have I known one of your kind to wander so far, though we often fly above your nests."

Rahm waited while a wind cried outside in the rocks.

"I too fled the great wailing that came last night."

"I hear in your voice many strange things," said Votcir, frowning. "Will you now return to your nest?"

"My . . . nest has been destroyed."

"Destroyed? But how is this?"

Rahm whirled and flung the stick, brown with blood, against the wall. As he pulled his shoulders in, something within him shook. A wing touched his back and he turned to look into Votcir's puzzled triangular face.

"You have saved my life," Votcir said, "and by this are we friends. What, friend Rahm, is this sorrow that makes your heart roar and your muscles sing on your bones with rage?"

"Thou dost hear the sounds of my heart?"

"Yea, and those of your tongue struggling in the back of your throat for words. My people have keen ears."

Rahm looked away. "Let us wash this blood from ourselves," he said hoarsely. "Is there a stream?"

"You do not hear where water is, beyond that rise?" Votcir pointed with the tip of his wing.

Rahm shook his head.

Votcir grinned quickly again. "Let us go wash, then," he said. "And you may tell me what it is that hurts you so deeply."

They started walking, Rahm in long strides, Votcir in short-legged jumps, his wings fanning to keep balance.

"Votcir," said Rahm slowly, "thy people and mine, we go naked and at ease in our own lands, fight with our hands, and only that which would attack us. We love our own kind and are at peace with all that is about us. But—but this is not true of all men." He recounted quietly, now, what he could remember of the night before. "And the thing that fills me with terror, Votcir," he concluded, "is that this evil is in me too. For I held a man's neck in my hands, and I squeezed and twisted until . . ." The words ceased as the two of them reached the stream.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rahm fell to his knees by the water.

"I am not that which I was, Votcir, and the man I now am—this man frightens me."

"Why so?" Votcir beat at the rushing water to cleanse his wings.

"Because I would go down again, Votcir. Because I would do the same to the neck of every black-cloaked man still in the village of Ciron."

Votcir nodded, brushing drops from his face with his shoulder.

"I hear you well, yea, Rahm. Your people are fine—" Again he made his quick, friendly laugh. "—Perhaps finer even than my own. We strive for peace, but often we do not achieve it. Sometimes we . . . Winged Ones, as you call us—sometimes we kill one another. We know that this is terribly wrong and we mete out punishment. It does not happen often. But it has taught us something which you are just beginning to sense: that violence lives in us all. Next you must learn, yea, that likewise no creature is devoid of good."

Votcir stopped and tilted his head. He began to mew into the air, then stood. His wings opened.

Rahm looked quickly up, but saw nothing.

"My aunt draws near," Votcir cried. Leaves spun back across the ground, and Rahm's eyes closed in the gush of air. When he opened them, Votcir was clearing the cliff. Rahm stared after him, puzzled.

A minute or two later, two shadows came in low over the rocks. Branches swayed and the figures alighted by the stream.

"Here is the groundling called Rahm, that saved me!"

The woman was shorter than Votcir but broader of wing. A brass chain of square links hung at her neck. She was obviously older than Votcir.

"You speak, groundling?"

"I speak. We always thought that thou wert the untongued race."

She smiled. "And you have saved my nephew. All men who fly will be grateful and give to you their honor."

"All?"

"He is a Prince of our tribe. Will you now come with us?"

Amazed, Rahm asked, "Where?"

"To our nests high in the rocks."

"But how could I climb to these?"

"Easily," said Votcir, laughing. He turned to his aunt. "He is tall, but thin and cannot weigh much. Come, friend Rahm, climb onto my back."

"Canst thou support me?" asked Rahm. He had never before thought himself light, but now he realized that Votcir, for all his short height, might come to Rahm's weight and half again.

"On his back and over his shoulders with your arms, groundling," Votcir's aunt said.

Rahm obeyed and felt the back surge and bunch beneath his chest.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The leathery sails spread from him and the earth sank. Leaves dropped toward him, became a green drapery sinking below Votcir's shoulder. Then no green below. Only rock.

"How does it feel to fly, friend Rahm?" Votcir called back, then out to his aunt: "Yea, he is light as a fledgling." He mewed and rose further. Rahm looked to see other shapes sailing by.

Rocks fell below, bare, gorse-covered. Chill wind stroked his arms and face, and the sun warmed his neck and the small of his back where no wind touched. The excitement of flight contracted his stomach and sent the blood pushing fast through his veins. He held tighter to the beating shoulders.

Votcir and the others who had joined him began to descend. The pitted cliff rose; at last Votcir's feet scraped rock. Rahm caught his balance and stood alone once more.

Drawing in his wings and breathing heavily, Votcir turned to Rahm.

"Here on the world's roof you will see how men who fly can live."

Others crowded in then, and there was a general cry: "Votcir! Votcir! Prince Votcir has returned!"

His aunt pushed through. "But Votcir—where is your chain of trust?" Rahm again noticed the chain around her own neck.

"It must have become lost from me when we were set upon by the terrible wailing."

"You cannot very well go without it. As I wear the sign and trust of a queen, so must you be ready to become a king."

Some had begun to gape at Rahm, and she turned to them.

"This is the groundling who saved your Prince's life," she said. "Rahm, of Ciron."

Once more a cheer arose.

"There will be a feast now," Votcir told him quietly.

A chain was brought and Votcir insisted that another be brought for his guest. The Prince himself placed it around Rahm's neck.

A trestle was carried down, piled high with yellow and deep-blue fruits. Votcir took one and offered it to his guest, saying, "We have flown leagues to bring these here."

An old one with torn wings made music on a rack of gongs while youngsters scrambled and darted over the rocks. The caves that pitted the cliff's side echoed with shouting and laughter. Over a twelve-foot fire trough, three spitted carcasses rolled in the flames, fat and crackling.

A leather sack of wine hung from a wooden fork, dripping into a tub. They bent to drink and Rahm's belly warmed in anticipation of food.

"Here, Rahm. You must make the first cut," Votcir cried, holding up a great knife. Rahm seized the hilt, planted his foot on the pitstones, and raised the blade as the fire tenders swung the first spit out—

His eyes caught on the blade's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

glitter, on this thing-that-might-be-a-weapon's glitter. And something in his chest rose. Votcir's wing fell across his back and the calm voice said, "This blade is only for the food that will bring happiness, Rahm."

Rahm's heart pounded. Some of the flying men had fallen silent.

He swung the cleaver down, crusted skin split, and juices rilled about the blade. And suddenly Rahm grinned; then the grin broke into laughter. The others cheered and began to talk in whispers of the dexterity with which he carved. ("But he has so many fingers!")

They caroused through the deepening evening. Sometimes six or more would leap from the rock and chase one another against the sun, across the sky.

"Fly with me, friend Rahm," Votcir said behind him after a while.

Once more he clung to the powerful shoulders. The wine was heavy in both their heads. "Watch that thou dost not crash me on the rocks," Rahm said. But Votcir grunted, shoulders raised—and they soared.

The fires flickered below them and wings reddened in the late light.

"It is a good life, my friend," Rahm said at length. "Yours are a fine people, that I like."

"Yea, they are good men and women." They arced from the cliff in a long glide. "And you are happy now. I can hear it."

"The wine has dulled thy ears."

Votcir shook his head. "For a moment, many moments, you were happy. Will you stay with us?" After a silence, the wings began to beat beneath Rahm again. "I have heard your answer."

"I want to go home," Rahm said softly.

"I have heard," Votcir repeated, and they descended on the night.

"Where are we?" Rahm asked. Neither moon nor stars broke darkness.

"At the edge of the field where you bury your dead."

Rahm stepped away and heard Votcir's wings close.

"Do not stumble over the corpses," Votcir said.

"Are there many about?"

"There is no one to bury them. . . . Friend Rahm?"

"Yes, Votcir?"

"I must go back now to my own people. Yea, but I will listen for you always." Votcir laughed. "That is what we say when we part from our friends."

Rahm seized Votcir's shoulders. Abruptly then, he turned and walked forward. Wind rushed his back and there was the dull thunder of wings in the dark.

Grass gave way to the road's dust, and he turned toward the town. Fires flickered at the windows. He stopped by one shack and looked in.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A woman sat at the table with her head on her arms. Rahm's hand slipped on the sill, and the woman raised her head but didn't turn. She must have fallen asleep crying, he realized, for now her back began to shake until once more her head fell onto her arms.

At another window, he saw a man sitting on a stool, back stiff, hardly breathing, eyes fixed vacantly on the glowing hearth. In the next room children slept fitfully.

He stopped before the cottage of the old weaver and from the door heard her chattering to herself. "They shall not have it! They shall not! I say that they shall not have it!" She hobbled into the firelight, bolts of cloth under her arm. "Never, for them," she muttered and began to tear the blue patterning across. Rahm turned away as she flung the first fragments at the fire—

Lights, horse hooves.

"Hey, there! Cironian! What are you doing out?"

Rahm whirled, hands over his face to block the light.

"You know the ordinance, Cironian. No one is to be out after curfew. Come with me."

"With you—?" Rahm began, pulling his hands from his eyes.

"You are under arrest, Cironian. Do not make further trouble for yourself."

A rope dropped over his shoulders and was yanked tight as the horse moved forward. Bewildered, he stumbled after the Myetran.

V

From the corner of the weaver's cottage Naä watched the soldier ride off with Rahm in tow. Till now she had thought him killed in the first night's massacre. She had spent her time observing the people of Ciron and following the soldiers and, though she defied the curfew, had managed to avoid arrest. She had recognized Rahm in the light from the weaver's window, was about to greet him when the patrol rode by.

After the initial shock, she bit her lip, then hurried after them.

The hate an adopted child feels for its parents is sometimes searing, but often there is no love more tenacious. Naä's love for Ciron was a thing that filled her stomach, her hands, flooded her eyes—and her anger at Myetra was not tempered by the native Cironian gentleness. She had hidden her harp in the burnt sticks of Ienber's hut, vowing there would be no music until the day Ciron was again free. Already she had caused the Myetrans considerable mischief by befouling the supplies of wine for the soldiers with sheep dung. And twice she had set fire to their camp, though on each occasion it had been detected early and extinguished. The reaction had been increased harshness on the people of Ciron. After she released a dozen Myetran horses

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and four Cironians not even suspected of the crime were flogged in the square, she had stopped such sabotage and now sought a way to do hurt that would not rebound on her friends.

She turned at the square and realized that she had lost Rahm. Though she had learned much from her spying, she still was not certain where prisoners were kept.

Finally she started for the Myetran camp, whose layout she knew vaguely, and hurried over the charred stubble of grain stalks.

She bellied under the wire fence strung about the enclosure and sprinted to the side of one of the officer's tents. Farther down the fence a guard was walking away from her.

A voice came to her through the canvas.

"Handsman Kire, this will *stop!* I ordered them executed. You had them flogged."

"Nactor, my Prince. . . ." A softer voice.

"There *is* no explanation! You, Kire, have been given a great opportunity, an opportunity allowed to few even among ourselves, and high position—to lead the mighty forces of Myetra. Is this how you would use that position? Is this how you would have Myetra known? And your *own* people?" There was a pause. "Were you not so good a soldier, it would be bad for you, very bad. It is only that which saves you from my wrath." A longer pause this time. "It is dangerous to cross me, Kire. Perhaps more dangerous than to cross Myetra Himself."

"My Prince, I truly thought—"

"*What* did you think, Kire? At this point I would like to know if you *were* thinking at all. Personally, *I* thought that you had lost your mind!"

The man's breath came stiffly. "I thought, sir—I thought perhaps we might—learn something from them . . . who is responsible for the fires, the horses, the ruined wine."

"We could take any one of them off the street and beat that knowledge from him."

"You have tried that, my Prince. But let me pick out some one whose confidence I have gained, that I may send him among them. Allow me to select a man—"

"Choose a girl." The voice was hard, definite. "Break her, violate her, bend her to you. Then send her in among the prisoners. That is my order, Kire. You have disobeyed me once. If you do it again. . . ."

Silence. The sound of boots over carpets and hard-packed earth. The scratch of canvas on canvas as the flap was pushed back. Kire spoke to a guard: "Bring me some woman of Ciron—"

The Prince's voice cut across his from inside the tent: "A young and pretty one."

"You have heard your Prince."

Naä released her fists from the canvas. She marked the guard's di-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

rection, made her way between the tents, and slipped once more beneath the fence as she heard his horse reach the paved square. She hurried behind him through the night.

Once or twice the soldier paused—trying to remember who lived where, she decided. At last he chose the one where Kern the quarryman had lived. He swung down from his horse and battered on the door.

"Who is it?"

Naä recognized Abrid's voice.

"Open to Myetra!"

"What dost thou—"

"Open!"

When light split the wood, the guard shoved the door fully back. The frightened boy stood in the firelight.

"Where is your sister, Cironian?"

"What wouldst thou—"

The soldier shoved him in the chest. "Call her!"

Abrid turned and spoke softly, "Rimgia?"

A moment after, the girl appeared, bright hair tousled, eyes heavy with sleep. The soldier seized her arm and she snapped awake, cried out.

Abrid jumped forward. "Touch her gently or not at all." The guard struck him in the temple. The boy slipped, head striking the door jamb, and lay still.

Rimgia's cries ceased. Only her eyes moved, up and down, left and right.

The guard pulled her to his horse, bound her and swung to the saddle, laughing. "Follow well, Cironian, and do not fall and scratch that pretty face, or it will be bad for you." The horse started, and Rimgia staggered as the rope pulled taut.

Naä ran until she reached the stumbling girl, firmly put one arm around her shoulder and one hand over her mouth. She bent her head and whispered, "It is Naä." The girl almost stopped, but Naä pushed her forward. The guard did not turn.

Naä loosened the knots in the rope as they walked, and when it was free, lifted it over the girl's head, whispering, "Now go to Abrid." She slipped the rope over her own shoulders then and lowered her head as the guard looked back, her heart pounding, her mouth dry.

The guard looked forward again.

She was led across the burned fields, through the gate. They passed tents until they reached the one by which she had crouched but moments before. Her captor dismounted and pushed open the flap of the tent.

"I have a girl, sir."

She heard the one called Kire sigh. "Bring her in."

Naä clamped her jaw. She looked at the triangle of light she would have to cross under the guard's eye and was terrified. But the one called Nactor said, "Take her to your own tent, Handsman Kire." His voice held at the same time

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

smoothness and impatience. "This is your idea. I want none of it."

"Yes, Prince Nactor."

A man appeared in the wedge of light and took her arm, silently moving her forward. Though the skin of his hand was rough, his touch was not. Twenty feet into the darkness he stopped, removed the ropes and flung them far from the path. Then he started to walk again. For a moment Naä had the strange thought he did not care whether she stayed or bolted.

She stayed, and when he pulled back his tent flap and the orange light hit his face—his face turning suddenly to her—he looked surprised that she was still with him. He stepped back to let her enter first.

In the middle of the tent she turned to look at him as the flap fell. The brazier light lashed over strong features and caught in unkempt, oddly colored hair. The fire accentuated the redness at the corners of his eyes, and the dust of a day's beard gilded his cheeks.

"Thou lookest to be hard worked," she said shortly in the Cironian dialect. "Doing injury hast worn thee down, I see."

"I have not slept much, or well."

"Thou hast dreams?" Bitterness whetted her rich, singer's voice to something sinister.

Kire reached up and unsnapped his cloak. Slowly he walked to his cot. Across it lay a puma's pelt, the skull still in the skin. His hand absently stroked the fur. His eyes strayed back to her. Naä felt chill at his gaze.

"What dost thou want with me?"

Kire suddenly shook his head. He walked to the tent flap and pushed back the canvas.

"Go," he whispered.

Naä frowned.

"Go." He leaned forward with urgency. "I will tell them that you have escaped. You can slip under the fence but a short distance from here and return to your village."

Her puzzlement was like a confused map. She turned it in her mind to discover the pass through.

"Suppose I don't want to go," she said, letting the Cironian inflections drop from her voice. "Suppose that I wish to stay and find out what sort of man you are."

Kire frowned. "Who are you?"

"My name is Naä. You are called Kire?"

He stared at her, then nodded. He dropped the flap and returned to the cot again.

"Your speech," he said. "You are not of Ciron."

"I am a wandering singer, who has come to very much love this land you burn and plunder."

Kire swung the puma pelt over his back and fastened the claws together under one arm so that the beast's head grimaced alongside his own.

"A nobler garb than your own accursed cloak," Naä said.

"The gift of a friend." He sat on

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the cot. "If you are to stay, then take that stool there."

Naä sat, and for a moment there was silence.

"You know these people well," Kire said. "Tell me, are they truly as gentle as they appear?"

"In all my travels I have seen none more so."

"Could you tell me of some violence, some cruelty they indulge, so that I will not . . . dream."

Naä was silent.

"What would you do, singer, if you were myself? What would you do if, along with your black cloak, you wore a sense of injustice—not justice itself, only a certainty of its absence—if you wore that as close about you as this lion's pelt? Would you just leave the whole affair, go home, resign your post to another? Or would you stay, trying to mitigate the crimes which those around you commit—changing a death sentence to a prison term, making an execution a flogging, reducing a flogging of ten lashes to two? —Tell me, singer."

After nearly a minute, Naä said, "I would get very little sleep. I would not sleep at all until I had done more than mitigate. I would turn openly against them, fight until they stripped skin and muscle from me."

Kire smiled. "You say that easily. For you sit on your side of the tent and I on mine."

"Perhaps," said Naä. Suddenly she was angry. "And will you now tell me that because you are so much a friend to the Cironians, I should befriend you, maybe go among the prisoners you have spared and play the fox, digging out the leaders of those who have plagued your camp?"

"No."

"And if I told you I had crouched outside your Prince's tent and heard the plans you set there, so that I *know* this is what you intend?"

"I would say, 'What I spoke with Nactor, I left with Nactor.' "

"And if I told you that I was myself responsible for your troubles—what then, friend of the Cironians?"

"I would say, 'Teach me to do the same.' Tell me how I can turn openly against all this."

Kire stood.

"Now suppose I tell *you*—that I also hate Prince Nactor. Suppose I tell you that I have but waited, prayed for some sign to know which way I must take. I offered you freedom once before, this evening. Suppose I now offer it to you again." He pulled back the flap.

And Nactor said: "You are a fool, Kire."

Guards rushed in around the bearded Prince. But Naä stooped, grabbed the edge of the rug and yanked upward. The brazier fell, spewing oil, and the guards went tumbling. In the first moment of smoke and confusion she was under the tent's edge, panting.

She looked for ways to run, but something held her in place, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

same curiosity which had brought her there. Footsteps approached at a run, and she heard water splash the canvas. Then, as order was regained, the last shadowed forms left the tent, Kire bound and held by guards.

She heard the Prince speak.

"Kire, this has gone far beyond your usual rank insubordination. That, I learned to overlook; this is treason. Even should I wish one, I have no choice.

"You are to be executed at dawn."

VI

Many about the floor of the council house had hauled stones to build it. Now it was a prison, and Rahm sat in the corner watching black-cloaked guards prowl among the naked, dirty figures around him. His eyes moved to the window where grey had nudged out a corner of darkness and silhouetted a branch that shook in the occasional breeze.

The door creaked open and another black-caped figure entered.

As the guards turned and saluted, the soldier removed a small box from his pocket, holding it before him. Rahm squinted as light struck his face.

"I have a job for a dog," the Myetran said. He ambled across the floor. "I need a strong one—you, or perhaps you. Or you."

Rahm was the second indicated.

"Dogs," the soldier repeated. "But dogs are vicious; they fight for what they want, tear at one another over leavings. But you fools, you simpering monkeys, are less than that. Which of you can hate? Which of you can do a man's job with hard heart?" He flashed the light in one face. "Have you ever killed a man?" The face fell away. "Have you?" He turned to the next, and that face lowered. "And you?"

Rahm nodded.

Prince Nactor raised his chin. "Have you, now?"

Rahm nodded again.

Prince Nactor laughed. "So then, you are not all sniveling rats. —Get up. Come with me."

Numbly Rahm rose. At the door the Prince pursed his lips and looked the powerful youth up and down. He did not bother to bind him as they stepped outside. A quarter of the sky had gone grey with dawn. As they walked, the Prince asked, "Tell me, Cironian, can you handle an axe?"

"I can swing a quarryman's pick."

The Prince nodded. "I think that will do." As they reached the gates of the Myetran camp, he spoke again. "Are you not curious what this job may be?"

"Thou wilt tell me. In thy time."

Nactor chuckled. "I need an executioner, Cironian. I wish to show one of my treasonous men just how gentle you are. It will be the last thing he learns. And you will learn

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

how strict we are with our own, so that you will entertain no illusions of our leniency with you."

They reached the central area of the camp.

"Bring the block and axe!"

Two guards lugged a dark wood block into the center of the space. Another came out with a double-headed axe. Grey streaked the sky, silhouetting the trestled towers that still held the loudspeakers.

"Escort the prisoner in," Nactor demanded, and more guards moved away, cloaks billowing in the dawn winds.

"Can you swing this axe, Cironian, and bite through the neck of a Myetran soldier?"

Rahm looked at Prince Nactor. He neither nodded nor shook his head, but the Prince smiled, then held up a black hood and dropped it over Rahm's head. The world blinked out, reappeared through eyeslits in the black cloth.

Guards stood beside a tall figure with bent head. Holding him by either arm, they marched toward the block. A black cloth had been tied over the prisoner's eyes. Nactor touched Rahm's arm and they started toward the block from the other side.

One of the guards shoved the axe-handle into Rahm's hand. His fingers on the shaft of wood recalled a living neck, a twisted stick, the handle of a cleaver. His stomach grew heavy, and his breath whispered inside the cloth.

The guards forced the prisoner to his knees before the block.

"Now, Kire," said Nactor. "Now you will see what your gentle Cironians are." He snapped the mask from Kire's eyes. "Look on your peaceful Cironian now!"

Kire's blinking eyes stared blankly at the black hood.

"On the block," Nactor said, and roughly the guards forced him down. Then: "Cironian, cut his head away."

Rahm lifted the axe.

A gust of wind over the dawnlit ground ruffled the puma pelt still clasped about Kire's back. Beneath the hood Rahm frowned. Recognition built slowly, and Rahm began to shake.

"I said cut his head off," Nactor repeated quietly.

Rahm spread his legs, raised the axe back over his shoulder, and heaved—not down, but sideways. Nactor did not even scream. He staggered back with the blade in his chest. As Rahm jerked it free, blood bubbled on his lips and he collapsed.

Rahm whirled, swinging, and caught the arm of one of the guards against the block. With one hand he pulled the blade from the wood and with the other, tore off the hood. Kire, who had staggered back, half crouching, now stared up into the Cironian's face. Rahm whirled again, and this time the blade struck a soldier on the hip—he went rolling in a tangle of black cloth.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The man with the severed arm was screaming, and the screams had begun to rouse others in the camp. As Rahm swung again, glittering flame caught his eye, but it was from Kire's hand. He had grabbed the gun from the screaming man and had just disposed of another Myetran.

"You see, friend Kire!" Rahm shouted. "You see how I am?"

And he swung his axe again.

RAHM. KIRE. WATCH OUT!

The thundering voice crashed the air about them. They whirled together to dodge flame and stumbled into a group of soldiers who rushed them from behind. As the first soldier fell before him, Rahm saw, high in the webbed girders of the speaker towers, Naä crouched on a beam, clutching the little silver rod in her hand.

LEFT RAHM!

Her magnified voice bellowed down to them, and he spun in time to duck fire.

BEHIND YOU KIRE!

And Kire whirled.

They gained ground, but were soon pushed back toward the towers as the camp mobilized. Rahm finally jumped back beneath the struts, grabbed a beam above his head, lashed out with his axe in one direction and his feet in another, and caught two men at once. But they were hopelessly outnumbered.

A frightful cry from Naä multiplied and reverberated over the camp. Rahm's first thought was that one of the Myetrans had mounted the tower and she was in danger—but the next moment immense shadows dropped toward them. The soldiers looked up, and the air was filled with the sound of mewing.

Surprise froze them; then claws and talons raked at eyes and bellies. One shape sailed low among the rest and came up short, wings pulsing and throbbing, the chain at his neck rattling.

"Votcir!"

The sails reversed and Votcir hovered, crying, "Jump on, friend Rahm!"

Still holding the axe, Rahm swung out from the girder and collided with Votcir, his free arm locking over the winged man's shoulder. Votcir sagged momentarily toward the ground; then thunder caught in his wings, and they rose.

As first sunlight leapt the horizon, across his friend's shoulder Rahm saw chaos on the field far below. Tent ropes were pulled up and canvas dragged into the air. Black capes fled out from the camp in every direction. One winged man flew away with the corral gate, and horses scattered themselves like flung marbles across the field, circled, and were gone. Patrols came from the town at a run, then turned and fled still more quickly.

Exhausted, Rahm let his head sink on the muscular neck and listened to the dull, distant rumble of the battle below.

When he looked up again, Votcir

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was still circling the camp grounds.

"See them run," the flying Prince cried over his shoulder. "See the black-caped groundlings scatter in fear. And where now, Rahm? Where now?"

"The council building," Rahm whispered. "The one of stone."

Votcir dropped so quickly that Rahm felt his heart release, then catch itself a moment later as their descent slowed. Gravel scattered under Rahm's feet as he hit ground. He caught his balance and rushed to the door of the building. He raised the axe, struck forward: the lock shattered and the door slammed back.

The guards had already fled, locking the prisoners in. Now as sunlight fell on the stone, they blinked, rose to their feet, blinked again.

"Thou art free!" Rahm said. "Thou art free!" He staggered back from the door, and one by one the prisoners stepped from the council building. "Thou art free," Rahm said again. "Dost thou stare at the sun so strangely after so—. But no, this is my flying friend, Prince Votcir. It is he that has helped me free you! Do not gape at him!"

But their eyes were fixed on Rahm, not Votcir.

Then Rahm looked down. The hand that grasped the axe was slimy with blood; his wrists were red as well; his arms and shoulders as high as he could see. His feet and legs were covered to the knees, and twigs and refuse stuck to them. His thighs dribbled red; his groin and belly hair were matted with it; his chest gleamed. He stepped backwards, to flee the sight of himself, and backwards again, almost falling. He looked up at his people, shook his head and couldn't stop. He stepped back again, trembling.

And a scream begun in his gut at last pulled loose, and he turned, ran—the axe dropped—and ran faster.

VII

A stream that bubbles from the mountains passes close to the village of Ciron. When Rahm climbed to the bank once more, his dripping skin was raw, and his throat had howled itself, first to hoarseness, then to silence.

He took the chain Votcir had given him from the grass and put it again around his neck. Still dazed, he turned to the town. His breathing was loud and slow.

Abrid, red hair tufting from white bandage, came running down the road. "Thou wilt work with us again in the stone pits, Rahm," he said, seizing Rahm's wrist. "I will now be in charge and have been asked to come to thee."

Rahm stood silent a long while, then pulled his hand from Abrid's. "I do not know." He started to walk again, leaving the boy blinking after him.

The bristle of the burnt field

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

crackled under his feet. Sail-like wings still flickered about the towers where Votcir had set a guard against the Myetrans' return.

Naä rose from beside Kire and called to him. "You are all right now, Rahm! So are we all; it has passed. I have met Votcir, and he has explained to me how it was that he came!"

Rahm looked puzzled.

"They heard me calling your name through the speakers and knew that you were in danger."

Kire stood now and extended his hand.

Rahm looked at it, not understanding. He did not take it.

"There are no thanks I can give you for my life," Kire said after a moment. "But you are all right?"

Rahm nodded.

"I am glad to see you once more," Naä said, "before I leave."

"Thou art leaving Ciron?"

She turned to show him the harp on her back, and her face shone with a strange smile, as though she wished to say, I am sorry. She looked into his eyes. "I shall make a song about you, Rahm."

"Thou wilt sing me to strangers? To others like those of Ciron, which you loved?"

She nodded.

"And thou, Kire?"

"I return to Myetra, to tell them of our . . . defeat. You will be glad to see the last of me. Now you may return to your people and be again at peace."

Rahm shook his head. "I too will go."

Naä pursed her lips. "Perhaps another week's wandering will be good."

"But I will not come back this time. I—I am not that which I was. There is no place in Ciron now for me."

"We are none of us, I think, the same," said Kire.

The sun darkened and they squinted up now as roaring wings dropped. "Votcir!" Rahm called.

A mewing answered.

"Votcir, watch over my people."

"Friend Rahm, I will watch over them, yea, until you return."

"I may never come back."

". . . I will watch, and listen."

Rahm waved to the flying figure, then turned and walked across the campgrounds to the road. Kire and Naä stood watching as he passed along it and at last out of sight. On the horizon Votcir circled a final time and shot off toward his mountains.

After a moment then, Naä turned back smiling. She sat and swung the harp to her lap, plucking a run of open fifths, humming softly.

But Kire stood still staring, at the girl now, as recognition settled on his face.

"You offered me freedom, and I have found out what sort of man you are after all."

It was some seconds before he realized the words were not a part of her song.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FILMS

Baird Searles

LAST MONTH I MANAGED TO squeeze in an eleventh hour note to the effect that **The Andromeda Strain** (Universal) was well worth seeing. Before I enlarge on that, I would like to state that I did not read the novel—partially from that slightly snobbish attitude that science-fiction people have toward mainstreamers dabbling on their turf, but more from sheer lack of time. So my feeling toward the film is strictly on a cinematic basis, with no literary overtones.

As I said last time, it is essentially the most hackneyed theme of science-fiction film: the mindless, devouring terror from outer space and how to conquer it. An experimental satellite returns to Earth, and everyone in the small town near where it landed dies. Four scientists are collected by the government, having already been recruited for this possibility, and in an underground laboratory fight to find out why the alien substance on the satellite kills, and how to stop it. The film's triumph over triteness lies primarily in two aspects: brilliant production values, sustaining almost constant visual interest, and a script brimming with plain old common sense, a value sadly lacking in most science-fiction films. Production values cost money; a low budget film can't be expected to have them (some have, however. More on that later). Common sense does not cost money, at least not in Hollywood, but it is usually sacrificed to expedient action. The heroine must wander around by herself in the most dangerous location; otherwise the poverty stricken imaginations of the script writers can't think how to make anything happen. In *The Andromeda Strain*, the excitements and dangers that occur are there obviously to make the movie interesting, but they come about logically. And even more exciting than the action sequences is the sheer intellectual excitement of the scientific chase of a solution. Part of this won't be altogether clear to the layman, but one is carried along nevertheless.

The look of the film echoes the aboard-ship sections of *2001*, which is all to the good. The five-level laboratory, each level color keyed, antiseptic, and sterile, may offend the humanist in us, but is marvelous to look at simply as abstract art, and provides a fine contrast to the dusty Western village populated only by the dead.

Characterization is limited to the four scientists involved; in each case, it is minimal but not cardboard, and Kate Reid nearly steals

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the show as a dikey, snappish doctor impatient with all the security nonsense. This is a point, incidentally, raised often in the film, along with some other good ones concerning the uneasy relationship between science and government in today's world.

All in all, *The Andromeda Strain* is probably the best s-f film to come along since *2001*, and will probably even be preferred to it by the crowd that can't see beyond their slide rules, because it doesn't get all "mystical" and artistic. It will do fine for the rest of us, too, at least until Kubrick finishes *A Clockwork Orange.*

I was lucky enough to catch *Carnival of Souls* on television this month. What, you might ask, is *Carnival of Souls,* and rightly, since it's the least known, and maybe the best made, horror film I know of. For those two reasons I'd like to devote some space to it, since it does pop up on the TVs every once in a while (I've never seen it in a theatre, myself), and more people should know about it. Made in 1960 in the Midwest on a shoestring with a cast of unknowns, it's about a girl who survives a horrendous auto accident, and is thereafter pursued by a man only she can see. Style is all, here, and there is hardly a misstep or false move in the whole thing. It's less a film that makes you scream than one that continually sends nasty little shivers up your spine. The heroine is beautifully underplayed by Candace Hilligoss with a lack of hysteria justified by the denouement. The score is all organ solo, excellent use of an instrument that is depressing to begin with, and the photography and use of locations prove that lack of money need not inhibit brilliant filmmaking. There's one sequence of driving on a deserted highway at that melancholy hour after sunset but before dark that . . . well, keep your eye on the TV schedule. You may be lucky enough to find *Carnival of Souls* listed there.

Old & New Dept. . . . Saw two versions of Le Fanu's classic vampire tale, *Carmilla,* in as many days. The older one is called *Terror in the Crypt* (1963); hardly inspired, but mostly lacking in the standard plot cliches and with one or two notable moments. The new one is currently making the rounds as *The Vampire Lovers* (AIP) and spends so much time sexploiting Le Fanu's subtle Lesbian inferences that everything else is lost in the wash. For instance, those two little puncture marks are never found on the throat, but about a foot lower, a place I'd never guessed a major artery to be.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stephen Barr's latest story is about what happens when the members of an animal act engage in a joint operation to tame some pretty contrary humans.

THE MAN TRAINERS

by Stephen Barr

BARTLY MCQUEED PUSHED OPEN the door of my office without knocking and sat down without asking.

"Well," he said, "I've just fired my dog."

"What do you mean?" I said. "You can't fire a dog."

Bartly turned his blue eyes and his rose-quartz face to the window and watched a window cleaner across the street on the other side of Broadway.

"I couldn't take any more of his guff. I fired him, and he'll not get any letters of recommendation out of me, I can tell you that."

Bartly is an ex-vaudevillian and has a certain hard charm. He is over seventy, although to look at him you'd put him down as a well-preserved sixty. He saved his money during the Twenties and can afford to idle. He takes an occasional TV, or night club job when there is the right spot for him, but one suspects he does it for the fun of it rather than the money. Or to give his animals something to do.

He used to have an animal act; it was always a single with just one animal, which varied from time to time. One season it might be a trained pig that could spell and count by nuzzling cards, and the next it might be a cat that caught things in her teeth, or a dog that turned somersaults. On one unforgettable occasion it was a boa constrictor that did a strange and beautiful dance like an educated inchworm. We all used to wonder why there was such a quick turnover with his animals. I remember once asking why he wasn't using Tina, his capucin monkey, this year.

"You can't force it," he said. "I've got her on the farm, taking life easy, which I'd like to do. One season and they get overloaded; so

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you got to give them a rest." Very thoughtful, I thought.

"What happened to Gogo, the Educated Whatsis?"

"Retired," he said, but I thought I could see a look of concealment in his eye.

"Can't you use them in the act after they get rested?"

"No."

"Why not?"

He didn't answer me.

When Bartly comes into my office, I know it's not for a job or a touch because he has money, but it's invariably with a problem that I am supposed to solve for him.

"All right," I said. "What's the trouble this time? And what's all this about firing a dog?"

Bartly got up from the guest chair and went over to the window. "I never could do that," he said, pointing at the window cleaner. "I'm scared of heights, although I had a lizard once—lizard by the name of Emeralda. She had claws made out of little fishhooks that I sewed on her gloves, and she'd climb right up the proscenium and the fire curtain and hang from the old chandelier. Then one evening she slipped and I ran over to catch her, but she fell into the audience. There was a kid there—a baseball type—and he caught her like she was an egg. Everybody applauded, and Emeralda bit his hand, and the kid looks flushed and successful and came up the stage steps and hands her to me. She bit me, too, and I thought to myself what am I doing, making these characters count numbers and climb all over the place, which I wouldn't want to do myself. When I packed up that night to make the hop to the next engagement, I gave a very careful look at Emeralda. She was crouched in the corner of the little box she and I had decided was the place for her, and she looked at me with those funny little eyes that blink sideways, and blinked them a couple of times. Then in a squeaky voice she said, 'I hate you.' Period. Just like that." Bartly came back from the window and sat down again. "'I hate you,' she says," he repeated.

I looked at Bartly closely to see if he was overtired or drunk or whatever it might be to make him talk nonsense, but he seemed as usual: hard, friendly and talkative.

"Do you mean to tell me," I said, "that your pet lizard seemed to speak to you?" He brushed this aside.

"Look, Jackson, this wasn't 'seemed.' It was Emeralda crouched away from me in the box and saying 'I hate you.' I reached again, but she didn't bite me this time. All she did was squeeze out two gummy-looking tears from her sideways eyes and turn away. I was shaking so hard I couldn't find a chair to sit in. I called up Doc Westover and said to come around, which he did, and at once, immediately. When he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

arrived I told him what I've told you, and he went over to the little box where Emeralda was and said, 'I guess you mean *she* squeaked and you interpreted it to mean *she* was sore at you?'

"I started to say no, and Emeralda said, 'I hate you, too,' to Doc. I looked at him to see his reaction, but he didn't show a thing. 'Well, you heard her,' I said.

"Doc just shook his head. I couldn't figure it. Well, the next was an ape called Albert, a big friendly, confused type, who listened to me with his head on one side; and when I said to him, 'Looky, make like a person, will you?' he'd look at me and make with the eyebrows. One day this ape kind of clears his throat and made a noise that sounded like 'Okay, so what?' That's what it sounded like, 'Okay, so what?' I was on the other side of the room, fixing his cereal and talking to him as I always do with these characters, and when he says okay, so what, I drop the plate of food and turn around, and the ape is looking at me under his rear end the way they do, and I says to him did you speak? Yeah, says this monkey, yeah, okay, I spoke, so what?"

"Well, for God's sake, Bartly," I said, "if this was true, which I'm not admitting, why don't you put it in the act? A genuine talking animal—"

"No good," Bartly interrupted. "The audience wouldn't go for it. They'd think it was ventriloquism—or a concealed mike or something."

"But you could get a committee of scientists in, and they could set up tests—keep you out of the room and see there weren't any wires or whatever. Just think of the publicity!" Being an agent makes me think of publicity, and it was also making me forget that I didn't believe what I was being told. Furthermore, I'd been reading in the papers about a scientist who claimed that bottle-nosed dolphins communicated with each other in some kind of language of their own. Also they seem to understand us. . . .

"*Scientists!*" Bartly said disgustedly. "What do they know about what makes animals tick? All they know is their Latin names."

There was a pause, and I said, "I could understand with an ape you might get some grunts that'd sound like words—or have the tone of voice that meant something. That is, if you knew him well, but this business with a *lizard*. . . ." I shook my head, disbelief coming to me again. "Why, they're lower animals, not primates, not even mammals. You sure you weren't overworked? Or drunk, Bartly?"

"I don't drink when I'm working. The animals don't like it. And who's to go putting them into higher and lower? You ever see a chimp organize, and build things, like bees do? Why, even most humans'd be in a mess if they didn't have carpenters

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and bricklayers, and politicians to get out the vote." Bartly has a naive belief that the social order is somehow generated by certain of his Irish cronies. "That ape of mine," he went on, "is a real dumb-bunny, but my lizard Emeralda is a lot smarter than some humans. I only had to explain to her about the hooks on her gloves and the fire curtain *once*. She let me move her feet for her on the cloth, and she had it. Just try that with the average man. . . ."

"What's this about firing your dog?" I said, remembering his opening remarks when he came in. "What's the matter with him?"

"Talking back," Bartly said. "He's on the farm now, where he can make speeches to the other animals. All I know is he gets me flustered—and the act suffers. Giving me advice all the time in an undertone. Do this, he says, or do that, and not so hard on the boost-up—I can make it better without all the help, he says." He looked at me quizzically to see how I was taking it.

"I don't buy it," I told him. "I think you've got so that you interpret their grunts and squeaks, like your doctor friend said. Why don't you take it easy for a while?"

"Yeah? Well, get a load of this." Bartly McQueed had a self-assured look and reached into his side pocket and put something furry on my desk. "Meet Joe—he's a hamster," he said. "Now you can see for yourself." The furry object wiggled its nose at me, and Bartly said, "Go on, Joe, say something for the guy." The hamster turned towards him and tried to make it back to the pocket, but Bartly held it on the table. It squeaked several times, and Bartly looked at me triumphantly. "Well, Jackson? How about that?" My name is not Jackson, and I didn't see anything for him to be triumphant about, and I was irritated.

"Well, *what* about it? So it squeaked—don't they normally?"

Bartly shook his head, and the hamster climbed out of sight into his pocket again. "You weren't listening. You're like Doc, you expected squeaks so you heard squeaks." He took a peanut out of another pocket and put it in with the hamster, where I could hear it being shelled. I was beginning to get a headache—Bartly does this to me sometimes. The word fey, especially when applied to the Irish, has been overworked—not to say misused—but inside Bartly's tough hide there is an otherworldly, sensitive nature. If anyone could read your mind, Bartly could—or at least he was able to sense moods. It was obviously the explanation. He'd been with various animals so long, and on such intimate terms, that he understood their moods and their wishes, and he thought they were talking to him. Another thought struck me.

"Do they all speak the same lan-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

guage?" I asked. "And if so, what is it? English?"

He considered this for a moment. "Yeah, English—I guess you'd call it. . . ."

"Isn't that a bit peculiar? I mean, okay—the hamster's born here, but that ape? Didn't he come from Africa?"

"They pick it up from me," Bartly said. "God knows I talk to 'em all the time. Except. . . ." He let his voice trail off, and got a faraway look.

"Except what?"

He didn't answer for a moment, and then it wasn't quite an answer.

"With the pigeons, now, I can understand it. They hang around people; so they pick it up, but the hamster. . . ." He looked me in the eye. "That's why I bought him. He came from a pet shop, and he was talking the first day. There's so much racket and din going on in that pet shop you'd never be able to hear the customers—and anyway he was just born."

"Well," I said, "all he did just now was squeak, and—"

"All right," Bartly interrupted, "I'll *show* you! Here—" He took the hamster out again and handed him to me. I held him gingerly, but the little creature didn't move. "Put him in *your* pocket—and then I'll ask him to tell me what's in it. Will that convince you?"

I thought for a moment and then remembered that I had a new meerschaum pipe that I'd been given by a client. Bartly couldn't possibly know about it. "It certainly would," I said, and put the hamster in with it.

"What's he got in there, Joe?" Bartly said, but there was no response. "All right—bring him out. He's shy." Bartly reached for him and stroked his back. The little fellow squeaked a couple of times. "What's that, Joe? I don't get it." Then more squeaks, but my impression was that all it expressed was dissatisfaction and a desire to be returned to his original haven.

"Okay—a gag's a gag," I began, but Bartly held his hand up.

"He says you've got something round with a hole in it, and it smells like burnt leaves. Would that be a pipe, Jackson?"

"Come off it, Bartly. You know I smoke a pipe, so—"

"He said it was made of stone . . . something like that. Would that be a meerschaum, pal?"

I was surprised, but not convinced. Bartly had been around conjurers; so he might know some of their tricks—or *was* it mind reading? There was a cooing from outside the open window, and I knew some pigeons were on the sill, probably a male trying to impress some females. Bartly heard it too, and got a crafty look. "We'll try another experiment, pal. Keep your back to the window and hold your hands behind you where Joe and I can't see 'em." He brought the reluctant Joe out again. "See the pretty pi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

geons?" he said to him. The little animal squeaked, and not surprisingly, a pigeon looked in. "Ask that chap how many fingers the man is holding out. Hold out some fingers, Jackson."

I did so, feeling like a fool. The hamster squeaked, obviously wanting to be repocketed—and the pigeon cooed. So, they keep cooing, I thought. Joe squeaked again, and Bartly said, "Seven."

"Okay, Bartly," I said. "You're right, and I think you've got a cute mind-reading act, which I suppose you want me to book. But I don't see why you go through this rigmarole to impress me, of all people. I'll see what I can do."

Joe squeaked some more and got into the pocket unaided.

"He says the pigeons there think you're a tightwad. You never feed 'em. The last tenant used to." This was true, but I didn't see how Bartly could have known it. The thing was beginning to pile up; and when he said it wasn't an act, he didn't want it booked, and would I come to his farm for the weekend, I began to believe him, and accepted the invitation.

His "farm" is four acres of field and mainly trees, in western Connecticut, which may have been under cultivation many years ago. There is no fence around it, and I asked him if he wasn't afraid some of his animals might wander away.

"Not when they know they've got a good thing here," he assured me. "For a time I was worried about neighbors' dogs coming in and trying to start something—but one look at Backgammon and they changed their mind."

"Who's Backgammon?"

"The boa constrictor. And incidentally, he doesn't talk."

There was a chattering and to-do from the chimp, and Bartly said, "He *did*? When?"

More chattering—but I could swear that's all it was: no words.

"But for Pete's sakes!" Bartly said. "I thought they didn't have no vocal chords!" It seemed, according to the ape, that with the boa constrictor it was a matter of hissing—not vocal. It was this that began to convince me, because the ape actually did hiss during his speech. But if this was English, as Bartly said, something was wrong somewhere.

"All right," I said, "what's on your mind? I'll say I believe you, for the sake of argument. What's the problem?"

He looked around and lowered his voice. "Max—he's the dog—says they're cooking up something and I'd better watch my step! You know what's queer about that?"

I could see several things queer about it, but I shook my head.

"Why, Max has been giving me the silent treatment ever since I took him out of the act, is what. It's the first time he's spoken to me; so it must be something big!"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Come off it," I said. "You've been seeing too many horror movies."

"I never go to movies," he replied firmly.

I noticed a TV set on the other side of the room, and he saw me. "Or that, either," he added. "It's for Max and Joe, mainly. The ape looks too, sometimes, only he can't make out what's going on. He's a little dee-you-em-bee."

"Who was Max referring to when he told you 'they' were cooking up something?"

"The neighbors—the townspeople," Bartly said. "They've been after me for some time for keeping so many animals. They couldn't make out anything bad had happened, but they said it posed a danger. If you ask me it's all because of those damn boy scouts who wanted to set up a tent in my woods—never thought of asking *me*, natch. And there was that damn hunter—hunters all seem to think they can go anywhere if they've got a hunting license—and my chaps recognized what he was and drove him off. The ape took his gun and busted it. The bastard tried to sue me, but the local J.P., who's an animal lover, said he hadn't a prayer because he was trespassing. So now most of the town's up in arms. They're trying something—only I don't know what yet and the gang hasn't told me—or *they* don't know either. Anyway, as a professional animal-act entertainer, *I* have a license to keep so-called wild animals."

"I don't see what your neighbors can be cooking up, then," I said.

"Well, a couple of years ago a thruway was being put across near here, and the locals tried to get them to run it through my land, but the authorities weren't having any—it'd have meant a needless detour. So *that's* out."

At that moment Max came into the room—he's a medium-size, short-haired, mixed breed with very large eyes—and put a paw on Bartly's knee. He whined and went Woof! a couple of times, and Bartly said, "Well, *I'll* be. . . ."

"What now?" I asked.

"Max says they're putting out poison, the bastards!"

"Woof! *Woof*tah!" Max said.

"*And* traps," Bartly translated. "What do you-all suggest I do about it?" he asked the dog, and if a dog can be said to shrug, that's what Max did. "Emeralda told me," Bartly said, "That they—our chaps—took some of the poisoned stuff and smeared it on the tomatoes in the vegetable garden belonging to the bastard that put the poison out."

"What about the traps?" I asked. "Anything—I mean, anybody get caught?"

"Just some raccoons that wandered in and didn't know our group. They got Albert—that's the ape—to open the traps and let them loose. One had a bad leg, and they pushed him into the local vet's back window at night. Vets are just

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as sympathetic to wild animals as they are to pets. Anyway, Albert the ape—he's named after Einstein—put the traps, open, just outside their owners' back doors, and there were a lot of sore ankles, I can tell you. They all thought I'd done it, of course, but I had a good alibi, as I was doing a night club act in Chicago at the time; so *that* came to nothing. I think *they* think I'm some kind of a male witch—or wizard."

"All right, I get the picture," I said, "but what did you come to see me about? What can *I* do for you? I'd think a lawyer could help you."

His blue eyes narrowed. "*Lawyers!* They're worse than scientists—all they can do is yap about the law. When I told one the townsfolk were going to try to pass a local regulation against keeping wild animals, all he could say was that it wasn't unconstitutional and would probably come under the heading of a zoning law. Big help."

"I must say, I would hardly describe any of your folk here as 'wild' animals. . . ."

"You wouldn't say that if you'd seen Backgammon ease that hunter out of here."

"Was he rough with him?"

"No, but I wouldn't call him tame, either. And when Albert the ape bent that gun in a hemicircle, he made a face that they wouldn't allow in the toughest bar in New York. What I want from you, Jackson, is to tell me how my chaps as a group can convince this dim-headed village that our farm—or woods or whatever—is off limits and none of their beeswax."

"Haven't you any friends among the villagers—or town council?"

"Just that one J.P. He's an animal lover, but he's crowding ninety and they're forcing him to retire. The vet's a good guy, but he's not a member of anything, and the rest of the split-level group think he's a nut cake. All the rest hate my guts. If all my chaps were little, like Emeralda or Catherine the Catching Cat, I'd be in the clear, but Albert and Backgammon are pretty big. 'S lucky for me I haven't any tiger or elephant."

I began to get a faint but not quite definable idea. "Are there any factories around here? Or maybe a branch of a big one—I bet IBM has a special plant nearby. . . ."

"Nah. Their nearest one's their main one over on the Hudson at Poughkeepsie."

"I thought we passed a biggish place that looked like a factory on the way up here," I said.

"Oh, *that.* That's nothing to do with manufacturing anything; it's just a research lab. It's where food makers or packers from all over the country send in samples of their stuff that's been condemned by some consumer group as unfit for humans. Only this place fakes the tests and says the junk is okay. They also give phony recommendations to animal foods, and the result is a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whole mass of canned junk that pet dogs and cats are supposed to like, according to the TV commercials. Pet birds, too.

"There was a pet canary here last fall who nearly starved because they fed him nothing but some kind of scrap labeled Bird Seed For Your Favorite Bird. Luckily for him, the family six-year-old son let him escape and he joined a flock of orioles on their way south. Emeralda said a scarlet tanager told her the canary sent his regards to the gang, and was going to stay in New Orleans. He said he couldn't make it across to the Canary Islands."

"So?"

"If you and I could think of some way to get that fake research lab discredited, they might have to close up shop, and all the newcomers around here'd have to move away. All the split-level group that have it in for me and my gang work for the damn outfit, and they'd have to look for jobs elsewhere. Then we'd be back where we started—none of the old-timers around here objected to my chaps, just so long as they stayed on our farm, and didn't go browsing in the corn fields, which they didn't. Whoever heard of a boa constrictor eating corn on the cob?"

"Look," I said, "I wasn't kidding about a lawyer—if we're going to plan anything, we'll need his technical knowledge about how it'll work legally."

"We're not the planners," Bartly said. "The animals are planning something, and it's not going to have any law to it. They don't work that way. To them the human world is divided into good humans—that's you and me and the vet, et cetera—and the bad; that's most of the village. I should say the newcomers in the trailers and split-levels who work for the test lab. It's called Bowdler, Incorporated. The vet said it's a good name for 'em, but he didn't say why. Just Incorporated—and they don't manufacture anything."

"I've got an idea," I said. "Why don't we make up some really poisonous packaged food and send 'em a sample to okay? Then when they put their official mark of approval on it, we expose them."

"Nix. My chaps wouldn't go for anything like that. We've got to find out what they're planning—and help if needed. The trouble is Max won't tell me what it is—I think *they* think we'd be against it. I've got an idea it involves rats. My bunch don't dislike rats; they just regard them as competitors, and a sort of separate group. But rats have a way of being able to get into any building they want, and they can help. Ants, too."

"Come off it, Bartly! Don't tell me that you can talk to *insects!*"

"No, but Emeralda can. It's some kind of semaphore signals—there's no sound I can hear—but ants communicate with each other by waving their antennas—guess that's why

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they're called ants. Also by a sort of dance. Bees do the same; they tell each other where the best honey is at. With an army of rats and ants you could get in anywhere and do quite a lot of damage, if that's what they have in mind, but I doubt it—they don't operate that way—at least my bunch don't."

That was as far as we got, when Max came in and told us what was actually going on. The bunch had discovered a patch of marijuana growing, fortunately for Bartly, about a quarter of a mile away in a small clearing at the edge of the woods. It had presumably been planted by the younger members of a family that had moved away—or the kids were in college or boarding school at the time, early fall.

At all events Max had heard about it and its bad reputation and social significance, and he recognized the hemp plants—*Cannabis sativa*—by some nasal expertise unknown to humans. The local authorities were well aware that many of the younger set were getting the drug, but assumed it was being imported—the idea that they were growing it themselves never occurred to them.

The only local concern that resembled a factory—other than Bowdler's—was a large bakery which had started many years ago and had gradually increased its output and sales. Their chief, and comparatively recent, product was a sort of "health" bread—whole-wheat—they called Stamina, and the bakery's name was Aunt Sally's Kitchen, Co. Its being a "health" food, the customers would probably in most cases like to see the okay mark of a reputable testing outfit—such as the Good Housekeeping seal of approval—but owing to its convenient proximity, the Aunt Sally Company decided to send it across town to Bowdler's. Furthermore, they knew there would be a favorable report on payment of Bowdler's rather high fee—the payment of which ensured an okay.

Max and his friends knew nothing of this, of course, but they chose the night before the whole-wheat bread batch, from which the sample was going to be sent, was being readied for the ovens. They gathered the hemp and chewed it up, and the rats put it in the flour at Aunt Sally's Kitchen. The resultant loaves looked and tasted pretty much as would any "health" bread containing a bit too much bran. But owing to the baking process, the aftereffects of eating, say, two slices were what would nowadays be called psychedelic—and to a degree that could not pass unnoticed by the unwary eater. As an additional helpful coincidence, the marijuana patch was only about a hundred yards from the back of Aunt Sally's, and on the company land.

Not surprisingly, nobody at Bowdler's tasted the bread, but within six hours of its being put on sale in the local shops, a considerable num-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ber of food faddists had, and were experiencing an *elan* quite new to them.

When the hemp had been chewed up and given to the rats to take into the bakery, Max told them to open one of the windows so that he could go in to supervise things; but rats can't push up a window sash, and the best they could do was gnaw a hole in the wooden side walls of the basement and dig a tunnel in the earth outside leading to the surface. It was only just big enough for Backgammon to wriggle through, and he worked his way in and opened one of the backdoors. Max went in and saw to it that the hemp fragments went into the correct flour bin. Albert went with him, and when it was decided that enough was enough, he told the rats to stack the rest of the hemp in an empty carton. The carton was next to a pile of other discarded containers that was to be put out for the garbage collectors. So when the police came, one of them found it.

The reason the police came was that the husband of a lady who had bought a loaf of the whole-wheat bread was a botanist who had worked with the narcotics squad in Hartford the year before, and he recognized the illegal additive in her purchase—firstly from its effects and secondly with his microscope. He told the local cops at once, and they promptly raided Aunt Sally's Kitchen. In the latter's files the cops also found the bakery's recent correspondence with Bowdler's, and the large bill, its receipt, and the seal of approval. This smacked very definitely of collusion, and they got an immediate court order to do the same with Bowdler's, where of course nothing incriminating was found. Nonetheless, Aunt Sally's Kitchen's owners were charged with possession and sale of illegal drugs. They got out of it on the grounds of lack of motive—they had nothing to gain and everything to lose by adding the drug. The authorities accepted their disclaimer and turned their attention to Bowdler's again.

This time they had the managers of the place up for a pretrial hearing to explain why they put their seal of approval on an illegal and harmful product. The managers tried shifting the blame onto their underlings—there must have been a mix-up, they claimed, and the seal had been mistakenly put on a product that hadn't yet been tested. Heads would roll, they promised, and the personnel of the test lab would have some explaining to do. The magistrate who was conducting the hearing then asked for an on-site demonstration of just how they would go about testing the bread—other than merely tasting it. This meant a trip to the Bowdler building, and everything would have gone off all right except that the lab—a showplace that was never used for testing—had been rather subtly vandalized.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Since some of the public had to be admitted to the hearing, Bartly was present, and in his pocket was Joe, the hamster, who reported the planned on-site inspection to the rest of the gang, who decided to take a little action. Just after dark Backgammon and Albert the ape visited Bowdler's. The boa got in via a drain pipe and opened a window for Albert, who went to the lab and removed all the eyepiece lenses from the microscopes and put them in a jar of "natural" molasses that was supposed to be there for testing. Meanwhile, Backgammon stayed in the cellar and turned off the gas at the main, which supplied the Bunsen burners in the lab, so that when the examining committee arrived at ten in the morning, the demonstration was somewhat of a flop.

The net result was that Bowdler's lost their license, closed up shop, and fired their entire staff. The marijuana remained as a black mark on the small town, the older inhabitants of which blamed it on the older children of the newcomers; *they* were the ones who must have imported it (the patch was never discovered), though how and why it was put in Aunt Sally's bread remained an enigma.

All this meant that the newcomers—now out of jobs—could find no employment in the neighborhood, and practically all of them sold their houses and left—some of them in the trailers they were living in.

Bartly and his bunch are now living in peace, and boy scouts and hunters avoid their place. No one complains of their presence any more—in fact, they boast of it, and visitors from out of town occasionally call on Bartly and ask to be shown the animals.

ABOUT THE COVER: The title of this painting by British space artist David A. Hardy is 'Enigma'; the original version was first seen in London's first gallery exhibition of SF Art, Easter 1970 at the Portal Gallery.

Basically, it is a scene on Titan, Saturn's 7th moon. 3,500 miles in diameter, this is the only satellite in our Solar System known to have an atmosphere—mainly methane; in crescent phase, the ringed planet is 75,100 miles in diameter and 758,000 miles away, giving it an apparent diameter of nearly 5½° (the Moon is ½° seen from Earth). As to the other object which future astronauts appear to have discovered—the artist refuses to comment.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or us the Shadow never had quite the sting of the Green Hornet, perups because the latter was in reality a daring young publisher rather ıan a wealthy man about town. But for Mr. Theodore Conway, a nosılgiac of awesome dedication, nothing could match that mysterious ower of Lamont Cranston's, and the day that he completed his Shadow ollection was something quite special.

The Man Who Collected "The Shadow"

by Bill Pronzini

IR. THEODORE CONWAY WAS A ostalgiac, a collector of memoıbilia, a dweller in the simple, unomplicated days of his adolescence hen radio, movie serials, and pulp ıagazines were the ruling forms of ntertainment and superheroes ere the idols of American youth.

At forty-three, he resided alone ı a modest four-room apartment n Manhattan's Lower East Side, here he commuted daily by subay to his position of file clerk in ıe archives of Baylor, Baylor, eeds and Wadsworth, a well-reoected probate law firm. He had o friends to speak of—certainly no ne in whom he cared to confide, or ho cared to confide in him. He as short and balding and very lump and very nondescript; he did ot indulge in any of the vices, mior or major; nor did he have a wife r, euphemistically or otherwise, a irlfriend. (In point of fact, Mr. Conway was that rarest of today's breed, an adult male virgin.) He did not own a television set, did not attend the theatre, movies, or any other form of outside amusement. His one and only hobby, his single source of pleasure, his sole purpose in life, was the accumulation of nostalgia in general.

And nostalgia pertaining to that most ubiquitous of all superheroes, The Shadow, in particular.

Ah, The Shadow! Mr. Conway idolized Lamont Cranston, loved Margo Lane as he could never love any living woman (psychologically, perhaps, this was the reason why he never married, and seldom dated). Nothing set his blood to racing quite so quickly or so hotly as The Shadow on the scent of an evildoer, utilizing the Power which, as Cranston, he had learned in the mysterious Orient, the Power to cloud men's minds so that they

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could not see him. Nothing filled Mr. Conway with as much delicious anticipation, as much spine-jellying excitement, as the words spoken by The Shadow prior to the beginning of each radio adventure: *What evil lurks in the hearts of men? The Shadow knows . . .* and the eerie, blood-curdling laugh, the laugh of Justice triumphant, which followed it. Nothing filled him with as much well-being and security as this ace among aces speaking when the current case was closed, speaking out to all criminals everywhere, words of ominous warning: *The weed of crime bears bitter fruit. Crime does not pay. The Shadow knows!* Nothing gave him more pleasure in the quiet solitude of his apartment than listening to the haunting voice of Orson Wells, capturing The Shadow like no other had over the air; or reading Maxwell Grant's daring, chilling accounts in *The Shadow Magazine;* or slowly, savoringly, leafing through one of the starkly drawn Shadow comic books.

Mr. Conway had begun his collecting of nostalgia in 1944, with a wide range of pulp magazines. He now had well over ten thousand issues, complete sets of *Black Mask* and *Weird Tales*, Vol. 1, No. 1 of 49 different periodicals including *Adventure* and *Dime Detective* and *Detective Fiction Weekly* and *Thrilling Wonder* and *Western Story* and *Doc Savage*. One entire room in his apartment was filled with garish reds and yellows and blues, BEM's and salivating fiend half-nude girls with too-red lip screaming in the throes of agony fearless hunters in the hearts o great jungles, stagecoaches out running blood-thirsty bands o painted, howling Indians. Then h had gone on to comic books an comic strips (*Walt Disney's Comic and Stories*, *Superman* and *Batma* and *Plastic Man*, *Mutt and Jeff Krazy Kat*, *The Katzenjamme Kids*, a hundred more), and to pre miums of every kind and descrip tion (decoders and secret-com partment belts and membershi cards and message flashlights, sp rings and shoulder patches, outdoo kits and compasses, microscope and secret pens that wrote in invis ible ink so that you had to pu lemon juice on the paper to brin out the writing). In the 1950's, h began to accumulate tapes of radi shows—some taken directly off th 16-inch discs upon which they wer originally recorded, some recorde live, some recorded off the air (Bo Hope and Jack Benny and Re Skelton and *Allen's Alley*, Eller Queen and Charley Chan and *M Keene, Tracer of Lost Persons*, Ton Mix and Hopalong Cassidy and Th Lone Ranger, *Buck Rogers in th 25th Century* and Captain Mid night, *Jack Armstrong, The All American Boy* and *I Love A Mys tery*, Dick Powell as Richard Dia mond and Howard Duff as *Your Truly, Johnny Dollar*, *Bold Ventur* with Bogie and Baby, *Fibber McGe*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and Molly, Inner Sanctum and *The Whistler* and *Suspense*).

But his favorite, his idol, from the very beginning was unquestionably The Shadow; the others he amassed happily, eagerly, but with none of the almost fanatical fervor with which he pursued the mystique of The Shadow. Hardly a week passed over the years that at least one new arrival did not come by mail, or by United Parcel, or by messenger, or by his own hand from some location in New York or its immediate vicinity. He pored over advertisements in newspapers and magazines and collectors' sheets, wrote letters, made telephone calls, sent cables, spent every penny of his salary that did not go for bare essentials.

And at long last, he succeeded where no other collector had even come close to succeeding. He accomplished a remarkable, an almost superhuman feat.

He collected the complete Shadow.

There was absolutely nothing produced regarding this superhero, not a written word, not a spoken sentence, not a drawing nor a gadget, that Mr. Conway did not claim as his own.

The final item, the one which had eluded him for twenty-six years—the last two of which, since he had obtained the final radio show on tape, had been spent in an almost desperate search—came to him, oddly enough, by virtue of blind luck (or, if you prefer, fate) on a Saturday evening in late June. He had gone into a tenement area of Manhattan, near the East River, to purchase from a private individual a cartoon strip of *Terry and the Pirates*. Having made the purchase, he had begun to walk toward the subway for the return trip to his apartment when he chanced upon a small, dusty neighborhood bookstore still open in the basement of one of the brownstones. On a whim, he entered and began to examine the cluttered, ill-lighted tables at the rear of the shop.

And there it was.

The October, 1931, issue of *The Shadow Magazine*.

Mr. Conway emitted a small cry of sheer ecstasy. He caught the magazine up in trembling hands, stared at it with protuberant, almost disbelieving eyes, opened it gingerly, read the contents page, read the date, read it again, ran sweat-slick fingers over the rough, grainy pulp paper. Near-mint condition. Spine unbroken. Colors only slightly faded. And the price—

Fifty cents.

Fifty cents!

Tears of joy rolled unabashedly down Mr. Conway's plump cheeks as he carried his treasure, his ultimate quest, to the bearded man at the cash register. The bearded man looked at him strangely, shrugged, and rang up the sale. Fifty cents. Mr. Conway gave him two quarters, almost embarrassed at the incredibly small sum; he would have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

paid hundreds, he thought, hundreds. . . .

As he went out hurriedly into the gathering darkness—it was almost nine by this time—he cradled the periodical to his chest as if it were a child (and in a manner of speaking, for Theodore Conway so it was). He could scarcely believe that he had finally done it, that he now possessed the total word, picture, and voice exploits of the most awesome master crime-fighter of them all. His brain reeled dizzingly. The Shadow was his now; Lamont Cranston and Margo Lane (beautiful Margo!), his, all his, his alone.

Instead of immediately proceeding to the subway, as he would normally have done when circumstances caught him out near nightfall, Mr. Conway impulsively entered a small diner not far from the bookstore and seated himself in a rear booth. He could barely control his excitement, and his fingers moved caressingly over the smooth surface of the magazine's cover, tracing each letter of THE SHADOW slowly and rapturously.

When a bored waiter approached the booth, Mr. Conway ordered coffee with cream and sugar in a perfunctory voice, and then he opened the magazine. He had previously read, in reprint form, the story by Maxwell Grant—*The Shadow Laughs!*—but that was not the same as this, no indeed; this was a milestone in the life of Theodore Conway, a day and hour to be treasured, a day and hour of monumental achievement. He began to read the story again, savoring each line, each page, the mounting suspense, the seemingly inescapable traps laid to eliminate The Shadow, the superhero's wits matched against those of archvillains Isaac Coffran and Birdie Crull and their insidious counterfeiting plot, Justice emerging triumphant as Justice always did. *The weed of crime bears bitter fruit, crime does not pay. . . .*

Mr. Conway lost all track of time, so engrossed was he in the magazine. When at last he came to the end, he sighed blissfully and closed the pages with a certain tenderness. He looked up, then, and was somewhat startled to note that the interior of the diner was now deserted, save for the counterman and the single waiter. It had been bustling with activity when he entered. His eyes moved upward to where a kitchen clock was mounted on the wall behind the service counter, and his mouth dropped open in surprise. Good heavens! It was past midnight!

He scrambled out of the booth, the pulp magazine pressed tightly under his right arm, and hurriedly paid for his coffee. Once outside, a certain apprehension seized him; the streets were very dark and very deserted, looking ominous and foreboding in the almost nonexistent shine from the quarter moon overhead.

Mr. Conway looked up and down

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

both ways without seeing any sign of life. It was four blocks to the nearest subway kiosk, a short walk in broad daylight—but now, in what was almost the dead of night? Mr. Conway shivered in the cool breeze, moistening his plump lips; he had never liked the darkness, the sounds and smells of the city at night—and then there were the stories he had heard, substantiated by accounts in the papers every morning, of muggers and thieves on the prowl. In the evenings, he invariably remained indoors, surrounded by his memorabilia, his only friends.

Four blocks. Well, that really wasn't very far, only a matter of minutes if he walked swiftly. He took a deep breath, gathering his courage, and then he started off down the darkened street.

His shoes echoed hollowly on the empty sidewalk, and Mr. Conway could feel his heart pounding wildly in his breast. No cars passed, and his footfalls, except for the distant lament of a ship's horn on the East River, the sibilant whisper of the night wind, were the only sounds.

He had gone two blocks, walking rapidly now, his head darting furtively left and right, when he heard the muffled explosions.

He stopped, the hairs on the back of his neck prickling, a tremor of fear winding icily along his spine. He had drawn abreast of an alleyway—dark and silent—and he peered down it, poising on the balls of his feet preparatory to taking flight. At the end of the alley he could see a thin elongation of pale light, but nothing else.

Mr. Conway's brain was filled with a single thought: *Run!* And yet, curiously, he stood motionless, staring into the black tunnel. Those explosions: gunshots? If so, they meant that danger, sudden death, lurked in that alley, *run, run!*

But Mr. Conway still did not run. Instead, as if inexplicably compelled, he started forward into the circumscribed blackness. He moved slowly, feeling his way in the absolute ebon expanse, his shoes sliding almost noiselessly over the rough paving. *What am I doing?* he thought confusedly. *I shouldn't be here!* But he continued to move forward, approaching the narrow funnel of light, coming into its glare now.

He saw that it was emanating through the partially open side door to the brick building on his right, an electronics equipment firm, according to the sign over the street entranceway. Cautiously, Mr. Conway put out a hand and eased the door open wider, peering inside. The thudding of his heart seemed as loud as a drum roll in his ears as he stepped over the threshold and entered the murkiness beyond.

The light came from a naked bulb burning above a small, glass-enclosed cubicle across a wide expanse of concrete flooring. Dark,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shadowy shapes that would be crates of electronics equipment loomed toward the ceiling on either side. He advanced with hesitant, wary steps, seeing no sign of movement in the gloom around him. At last he reached the cubicle, standing in the full cone of light. A watchman's office, he thought, and stepped up to look through the glass.

He stifled the cry which rose in his throat as he saw what lay on the floor within. It was an old man with white hair, supine next to an ancient desk; blood stained the front of his khaki uniform jacket, welling reddish-brown in the dim illumination. The old man was not moving.

He's dead, murdered! Mr. Conway thought fearfully. He had to get out of there, had to telephone the police! He turned—and froze.

The hulking figure of a man stood not three feet away, looking directly at him.

Mr. Conway's knees buckled, and he had to put out a hand against the glass to keep from collapsing. The killer, the murderer! His mind screamed again for him to run, flee, but his legs would not obey; he could only stare back at the man before him with horror-widened eyes, stare at the pinched white face beneath a low-brimmed cloth cap, at the rodent-like eyes and the cruel sneer on the thin-lipped mouth, at the yawning black muzzle of the huge gun in one tightly clenched fist.

"No!" Mr. Conway cried out then, in a strangled plea. "No, please! Please don't shoot!"

The man dropped into a low crouch, extending the gun out in front of him.

"Don't shoot!" Mr. Conway said again, putting up his hands.

Puzzled surprise, and a sudden trapped fear, twisted the killer's face. "Who is it? Who's there?"

Mr. Conway opened his mouth, and then closed it again abruptly. He could scarcely believe his ears; the man had demanded to know who was there—and yet, he was standing not three feet away from Mr. Conway, looking right at him!

"I don't understand," Mr. Conway said tremulously, before he could stop the words.

The gun in the killer's hand swung around and the muzzle erupted in brilliantine flame. The bullet was well wide of the spot where Mr. Conway was standing, but he jumped convulsively aside and hugged the glass of the cubicle. He continued to stare incredulously at the man—and suddenly, then, with complete clarity, he *did* understand, he knew.

"You can't *see* me," he said wonderingly.

The gun discharged a second bullet, but Mr. Conway had already moved easily aside. The shot was wild. "Damn you!" the killer screamed. His words were tinged with hysteria now. "Where are you? *Where are you?*"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Mr. Conway remained standing there, clearly outlined in the light, for a moment longer; then he stepped to one side, to where a board broken from a wooden pallet lay on the cement, and caught it up in his hand. Without hesitation, he walked up to the killer and hit him squarely on top of the head, watching dispassionately as he dropped unconscious to the floor.

Mr. Conway kicked the gun away and stood over him; the police would have to be summoned, of course, but there was plenty of time for that now. A slow, grim smile formed at the corners of his mouth. Could it be that the remarkable collecting feat he had performed, his devoted empathy, had stirred some supernatural force into granting him the Power which he now undeniably possessed? Well, no matter. His was not to question why; so endowed, his was but to heed the plaintive cry of a world ridden with lawlessness.

A deep, chilling laugh suddenly swept through the warehouse. "The weed of crime bears bitter fruit!" a haunting, Wellsian voice shouted. "Crime does not pay!"

And The Shadow wrapped the cloak of night around himself and went out into the mean streets of the great metropolis. . . .

Coming next month

Roger Zelazny's latest and best novel is titled JACK OF SHADOWS. It takes place on a world that shows only one face to its sun. On lightside, the laws of science hold true; on darkside those of magic prevail. The hero is Jack of Shadows, a thief who draws an inexplicable power from shadows. The suspenseful narrative describes his journey from darkside to light, in search of a Key that offers both immense power and an explanation of the mysterious disparity between darkside and lightside culture. JACK OF SHADOWS begins in the July issue, on sale May 27.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Joseph Green ("The Shamblers of Misery," August 1969) returns with a new story about Alan Odegaard of the Practical Philosophers Corps, whose job was to determine if intelligent beings existed on newly discovered worlds. On the planet called Beauty the possible intelligence was in the form of forty kilogram butterflies that appeared to be telepathic. The potential danger was in the form of something much more familiar.

THE BUTTERFLIES OF BEAUTY

by Joseph Green

SECRET HOLMES WAS BARE-breasted, and Allan felt his pulse quicken when he saw her running to greet him. She was a small blonde, weighing barely forty-five kilograms in 1 G and only 148 centimeters tall, but she had broad hips and breasts large for her size. The short skirt she wore above low open-top boots was made from vertical fibers covered by a thick but light fur, offering tantalizing glimpses of bare skin as the strands curled and yielded to admit the wind . . . and there was the explanation of Secret's provocative dress. The temperature was uncomfortably high, but strong, variable breezes were always blowing, and they were pleasantly cool on exposed skin.

Secret ran into his welcoming arms, oblivious of the amused stares of the other passengers, and they kissed hungrily and long. When she finally pushed against his chest and he reluctantly let her go, the shuttle pilot was opening the cargo hatch. There was a polite cough, and Secret turned to introduce Allan to the colony administrator, a short, dark, plump man named Pasquale Bartolini. He was surprisingly young for such a responsible post and had the typical political leader's heartiness and quick friendliness. He broke away to speak to a few other passengers but returned and accompanied them as Secret led Allan toward the round buildings of High Hope.

Allen had touched down on his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hundredth planet during the past year, and no two were alike. This one deserved its name: Beauty. The gravity was just over 0.9 G, the sky a clear blue without clouds, and green vegetation covered the land. There were no hardwoods visible, but a riot of ferns, brush, grass and flowers, all plants that yielded and moved with the ever-present wind, hid low rolling hills until they faded over the horizon. The tallest plants he saw were a grove of flower-topped trees strongly resembling Royal Palms, on the crown of the next hill.

Secret interrupted her own flow of small talk to say, "And congratulations on your promotion to sector chief; among other benefits it brought us together again. My decision was blocked by Brigadier General Timothy Terhune, and the case is on its way to the World Council. But our beloved chief saw my report and says it doesn't provide enough data to be certain we'll win. You're supposed to find additional evidence to back me up. And after you do, I hope the word will get around and the military learn to keep its nose out of our decisions."

"This is a serious case," Allan agreed. "But don't I get to at least examine the butterflies before I say you were right?"

Secret grinned and squeezed the arm to which she was clinging. Pat Bartolini said, "I'm sure the decision was correct, but the local New Roman leader happens to be the brother of General Terhune. Not that we *want* to leave Beauty, but most of us belong to the Conservation party and we try to apply what we believe even when it personally hurts."

They were at the outer edge of the raw new town of High Hope, and Allan looked around with interest. The dome-shaped buildings were made of foamfab and had numerous openings to admit the wind. A few people were clearing away the heavy brush and pouring new houses. The workers moved rather slowly and most were as nearly nude as Secret. They passed a large garden; he recognized several varieties of Earth food crops, growing well among plants native to Beauty.

Allan felt a vague unease. This colony had been established for more than two Eryears, and he had seen more progress on far harsher worlds after a few months. Evidently the heat kept the work efficiency low.

Near the center of the small town Pat stopped before an open sliding door and gestured for them to enter. Allan stepped inside and found himself shaking hands with a blonde Amazon named Astrid, Pat's wife. She was taller than her husband and wore only a skirt as short as Secret's. Allan had to make a conscious effort to keep from staring at her magnificent breasts. Women on Earth practiced every conceivable style of dress and undress, but the colonial worlds were usually re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strictive in their clothing habits.

When her guests were seated in comfortable but immovable chairs, Astrid walked into the kitchen area to prepare them drinks. There were no partitions in the small house, and the furniture was made of foamfab, including a huge bed protruding from the wall below an adjustable window. Although their hostess looked capable of breeding a multitude, Allan saw no signs of children.

The open interior, sliding doors, and numerous adjustable windows enabled the occupants of one of these homes to channel and control the varying winds of Beauty, which was far more economical than importing air-conditioning equipment. These people were adjusting to their new world rather than attempting to change it into another Earth, a good sign.

Secret and Pat, frequently interrupting each other in their eagerness, briefed Allan on Beauty's largest native animal, its forty-kilogram butterflies.

An hour later the foursome headed out of High Hope, following a trail through the thick brush to the nearby hill where Allan had noticed the tall flowers. As they approached the grove, he estimated the plants as less than two hundred in number, but they were widespaced and covered the rounded hill top.

"We're in luck; here comes a butterfly," said Secret, pointing into the sky.

Allan lifted his gaze and saw a startlingly beautiful creature gliding toward the grove, huge diaphanous wings curling and rippling as it lost speed. Those wings extended well ahead of the narrow body and were a burnt orange in color. They were laced with long black streaks of contractile tissue and had large yellow and white disks interspersed throughout the orange. As the creature settled into an immense blossom and out of sight, Allan saw a row of little grasping feet running the length of the body. The head, surprisingly large, was round as a ball and covered with thick fur.

"They can't actually fly with the wings," Secret said as they walked into the grove. "They launch themselves into a strong breeze, glide to get back into the jetstream, and ride those around and around the planet."

Allan had studied Beauty's peculiar atmosphere during the two-month trip from Epsilon Indi Six. The planet rotated in fifteen hours and had extremely strong jetstreams around its equator and adjoining temperate zones. These approached to within three kilometers of the ground. Below them was a shallow region of high turbulence and beneath that a slower but more massive balancing flow of air in the opposite direction. At ground level the many hills interrupted the even flow, while lakes and other areas with temperature differentials

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

created updrafts, breaking the bottom stream into innumerable cross-currents and ripples. There was no weather prediction on Beauty; the air currents were too complex for analysis.

Allan noticed that the varying breezes were gone and they were standing in a steady wind of more than usual intensity. The thick trunks of the flower trees were all bending in the same direction. Pat noticed his puzzlement and said, "We're in a windbore; you often get these on top of a hill, and sometimes they blow steadily for half an hour."

Secret and Pat were scanning the tops of the plants as they walked. "I think that one we saw land is the only butterfly here," she said as they neared the end of the grove. They turned back, picking their way carefully through the underbrush. The steady wind of the bore, which had been at their backs, now pushed against them. Allan found himself leaning forward and walking with his head lowered. He was jarred erect by a loud cry of warning from Pat and raised his gaze just in time to see a flat green disk as wide as his head flying toward him. It was spinning as it came, turning at an angle that let it rise slightly in the wind. Before Allan could dodge, it hit him on the chest, and he saw thorns protruding from its rounded rim, some of them snagged in the cloth of his light jacket as the wind whipped the flat body against him. Allan froze, and Pat called, "Turn around! Quickly!"

Allan did as directed, and the wind again caught the seed and ripped it loose. He saw it dip toward the ground, then tilt and start rising again as it disappeared. Pat and Secret hurried to him, alarm on their faces. Astrid was a little behind them.

"Did it sting you?" asked Pat. "That's a sin-sin seed, and the thorns are poisonous!"

Allan hastily shed his jacket and tunic and examined his chest. The two layers of cloth had prevented the short thorns from reaching the skin. "I'm all right. But where did that overlarge seed come from?"

"That bush," said Pat, pointing to a large one directly ahead. "This isn't the season for seed release, but one sometimes gets torn loose during a bore. My mind was starting to 'float,' and I didn't watch where I was leading you."

"I haven't felt anything this time," said Secret. Astrid nodded in agreement.

"When one of the butterflies wants to communicate it uses a form of telepathy," Secret explained to Allan. "That's one reason the person being contacted can't prove he's actually talked with the creatures. The first indication is that you start to feel a little lightheaded, something like the beginning of drunkenness. Only it doesn't get any worse, and you start receiving strong nonverbal sensory im-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pressions."

"I was almost on the verge of understanding this one when I saw that disk flying and was jarred out of contact," said Pat, sounding irritated. "Hey, there it goes!"

The butterfly suddenly launched itself into the air, great wings spread wide to take the wind, and the steady breeze brought it directly toward them. As it passed overhead, Allan saw that it was rising steeply. The wings did not flap but were in constant motion, the bands of black muscle tissue stretching and forming them to provide maximum lift. It was out of sight in seconds.

"You should see them mating on the wing," Astrid said in a dreamy voice. "I've taken up a glider—our favorite sport here, as you can understand—and hovered by them. The courtship ritual goes on for hours and hours, involving all sorts of aerial gymnastics, and when they meet and couple it takes just seconds. I've filmed a whole sequence, if you'd like to study it."

"Certainly, and all the other material you have on them," Allan replied, somewhat surprised. The big woman had seemed more formally correct than friendly up to now.

"Allan!" Secret called urgently.

He hurried to the small woman, where she was crouching behind the sin-sin bush. She pointed silently to the ground. There were two depressions where someone had knelt, and several broken twigs. Allan raised his gaze and saw the torn branch from which the seed had come. It was in the center of the bush, surrounded on all sides by more disks. The steady breeze at their backs had all the seeds flattened immovably against the dense body.

"So someone deliberately tried to sting you," said Pat, who had rushed to join them. "The New Romans think they can get Secret overruled, but they're afraid of you. We have an antidote for this poison, but you would have been sick for weeks, long enough for the case to reach the World Council. And since they didn't succeed . . . Allan, you'd better be very careful. I think your life is in danger."

"It certainly seems that way," said Astrid, who was breathing deeply with excitement. She seemed thrilled at the thought, giving Allan the impression that life must be very dull here for most colonists. He kept his eyes off her heaving bosom. During his ten years in space, he had been near death innumerable times, but usually from attacks by native lifeforms, not fellow humans. The murder of a Conscience was punishable by a summary court martial and immediate execution on conviction.

"And I think I know who did this," Pat added. "Buck Terhune; maybe if we hurry we can beat him back!"

Allan had no particular wish to confront Terhune at this point, but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he followed the short colony administrator as he set a rapid pace back to High Hope. Pat led them to the edge of town, where they saw a small group of men busily assembling a new area solar power plant. They were being supervised by a big man with very black hair who seemed older than most. Pat called him over and introduced Allan to the colony's chief engineer.

The tall man extended a broad hand and Allan had no choice but to shake it. He noticed that Buck was breathing heavily, but it could have been from helping the other men.

"Buck's group doesn't believe the butterflies are intelligent, although they've had the same contact experiences as the rest of us," said Pat.

"You mean we've all had lightheaded moments we couldn't explain," the burly engineer said immediately, and Allan could see that it was an old quarrel between them. "The fact that all of us get dizzy now and then doesn't prove some stupid overlarge insect is trying to talk to us. I think it's a very thin gas in the air we haven't isolated yet."

They talked for a moment and then left. The hurried walk back had been useless, as Allan had expected. "The real trouble with Buck is that he wants my job," Pat volunteered when they were out of hearing. "And he may get it if we don't start moving a little faster here. Trouble is, it's such a pleasant place that no one wants to work!"

Allan did not reply, but from what he had seen he felt that Pat was right. The number of new people that could be absorbed depended on how rapidly the present settlers built houses and planted foodcrops, and the people of this first town were moving very slowly. But if the butterflies were declared intelligent and the settlers had to leave before the lack of progress became known . . . Allan glanced sharply at Pat, but the short man's guileless face gave no hint that he considered Allan's decision important to his future.

Secret had taken Allan's arm as they walked, and he looked down to find her staring at his face. She grinned and winked, and he felt a quick stir of blood, thinking that perhaps they would spend the night together. It had been over four years since their paths had last crossed, and at that time they had arranged a short trip together and renewed the fire that had burned so heartily during the year of their trial marriage a decade ago. Secret was several years his junior and had been one of his students when he stopped teaching to try for the newly established elite corps of Practical Philosophers. Now he had been a member of the P.P. Corps, more commonly called the 'Conscience of Mankind,' for ten Eryears, and Secret almost as long. Their job was simple in theory but often difficult in practice. On many

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the thousands of worlds mankind had explored throughout the Hyades, Ursa Major and Scorpio-Centaurus star clusters lived creatures who were in a borderline state of intelligence. The Conservationists, the party in power on Earth at the start of interstellar exploration, had decreed that any world containing a species that met minimum standards for intelligence could be neither colonized nor exploited. Their power was now being seriously challenged by the New Romans, who felt that Man had the right to colonize any world not already occupied by civilized beings . . . of which none had so far been found.

The P.P. Corps was a semi-military cadre whose administrator was always a retired Space Service general, and though nominally a civilian, each Conscience held the reserve rank of colonel and could assume the authority at will. But this was primarily intended for their dealings with the three civilian groups in space, the university terraforming teams, industrial extraction plants, and colonists. If a senior officer in the Space Service disagreed with a Conscience, the case had to be referred back to the World Council for resolution.

Allan left the Bartolinis at their home and accompanied Secret to a guest house, to study her accumulated data. He saw with a thrill of joy that his two battered travel bags had been placed inside. Evidently Secret felt his agitation, for she laughed softly and came into his arms for their second kiss. When she pulled back at last, she said, "If you close the doors and windows you have privacy, but the heat melts you into jelly. If you don't close them, someone may walk in any second, because they've dropped the habit of knocking here. Or you can restrain yourself until dark. No one walks in when the lights are off."

She knew him better than he liked to admit. It hurt to say it, but Allan managed to get out, "We'll wait till twilight anyway. With a fifteen hour rotation it can't be too long."

He was wrong. It seemed a lifetime.

Next morning Allan dragged himself out of bed to the sound of Secret's cheerful singing in the recirculating shower, and they dressed and left for the communal dining hall. Allan had gotten little real work done the previous day—Secret had deliberately tormented him by her closeness and near-nudity until he had become completely distracted—and after breakfast he settled down to an intensive study of her notes. They began impressively enough, with an area survey of the butterfly population, extensive data on the huge flowers whose blossoms provided their only food supply, and a detailed report on the behavioral patterns of a but-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

terfly ingesting nectar. But after that, the quality of the data seemed to become fuzzy, as though Secret had stopped caring. He checked some of her later math and found mistakes in simple addition, and the safeguards she had used to exclude environmental influences on some behavioral experiments were hopelessly inadequate. A report of a full day spent following a particular butterfly about in a glider was nothing more than an account of seven idyllic hours in the sky.

Allan pushed the paperwork away, stretched, and walked outdoors. It was already noon in Beauty's short day. He saw Secret returning from an errand to the supply store and waited for her. She seemed subdued and handed him a fax sheet without comment. He saw that it was addressed to him in care of Secret. The message was brief:

NEW ROMAN PARTY CHAIRMAN CLAIMS SEVERAL MAJOR ERRORS ON P.P. DECISIONS, PROOF AVAILABLE SHORTLY. SECTOR CHIEFS TO DOUBLE-CHECK ALL DOUBTFUL CASES, EMPHASIZE P.P.'S TO PREPARE UNBREAKABLE JUSTIFICATION ON ALL ABANDON DECISIONS.

SIGGI B. WILSON, ADMINISTRATOR
CORPS OF PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHERS

"I don't know what our greedy friends on Earth are up to, but I do realize that my report contains too much subjective material," said Secret, sounding worried. "But you have to *be* here, actually communicate with a butterfly once, before you're qualified to judge them. Their thinking is nonverbal, all images/sensations. That doesn't make it any less effective."

"No, we've ruled in favor of species that communicate nonverbally many times," agreed Allan. "But since we're undoubtedly going to be questioned on this one, I think I'd better do a little more work. Can we get a butterfly body to dissect?"

"I've never seen one. But there's a story . . ." She paused doubtfully, then tossed her short blonde hair and went on. "Oh, the local version of the elephant graveyard legend. There are hot sulphur springs in the mountains to the west of us, and several of the colonists claim to have seen butterflies whose wings were torn descending toward them. One man hovered at the lowest safe height and watched for hours after seeing two hurt ones go down; they didn't reappear. And since they normally spend only a few minutes on their feeding plants and don't touch down elsewhere that we've observed . . ." she shrugged her bare shoulders.

"Secret, you know I'm biologically oriented. If you haven't run a dissection, then I think that should be our first job. How can we reach these hot springs?"

"We can fly a powered glider to a high-level plateau at the base of Charlemagne, the tallest peak, but we'd have to walk in from there

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The tiny powerplants on the flyers won't outpull the vicious downdrafts you find in the mountains. It will take two days!"

"Sounds good. Let's plan on it for tomorrow. Now, what about this film Astrid has? Is it useful?"

"Probably as good as mine." Secret sounded peeved.

"Then let's see if she'll show it for us tonight. For this afternoon I'd like to return to that grove and get a sample of the nectar they eat, since I notice you haven't chemically analyzed it yet. And we'd better check with Pat to be certain we can use a glider tomorrow."

"You can check with him tonight," Secret said sweetly, rising and moving toward the unmade foamfab bed. "And you won't need my help getting a nectar sample; I don't climb trees very well. I'm not accustomed to these short sleep shifts yet; you kept me awake half the night, and I'm going to nap till the second meal. Have fun."

Allan felt a small surge of anger but quickly repressed it. He was Secret's official superior, but giving orders to your lover was a difficult business at best and impossible with her, as he had learned long ago on Earth. He gathered up the sampling equipment he needed, dressed in a light jumpsuit, and left. Pat was not at home, but Astrid agreed to show the film and ask about the glider for tomorrow.

The jumpsuit was too warm for comfort, but it protected the tender skin of his arms and legs as Allan clasped the bare trunk and slowly worked his way up. The wind was again steady, though from a new angle, and the tree bent beneath his weight and the steady push of the breeze. By the time he thrust his head over the top, the trunk was leaning at a forty-five degree angle. Distrusting the light fronds that branched from the center, Allan kept his legs around the bole. He felt slightly dizzy, as though he had overexerted himself during the long climb, and rested for a moment. When the feeling of vertigo faded, he opened the sampling kit on his belt. The stigmas were large and soft, and he had no difficulty in tilting a pistil and squeezing the syrupy fluid into his vial. He capped it and reached for another . . . and froze when a huge shadow swept across his face. The thin whistling sound of air being spilled across a wide flat surface reached his ears. He looked up in time to see a gorgeously colored golden butterfly, wings rippling and curling as they shed air, shooting directly toward him. Just when it seemed the huge creature would knock him off his precarious hold, the great wings lifted sharply, coming almost together as they lost purchase on the air, and the long body dropped suddenly onto a frond. It dipped beneath the forty kilograms of weight, but held. Allan found himself staring into a golden-furred insect face

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

not a meter away, where two huge faceted eyes were calmly inspecting him in return.

One of the several reasons Beauty deserved its name was the absence of dangerous animals, and the colonists did not carry weapons. Allan froze, fervently wishing for his laser pistol. The creature did not appear to have teeth, and he might have beaten it away on the ground, but he was almost twenty meters high. The butterfly made no hostile move, and after his initial fright passed, Allan returned the stare with interest. This one had the usual bands of black muscle tissue circling and weaving through the wings, but both body and primary wing surfaces were a colorful riot of varying golds. Short yellow fur covered the entire round head except for the eyes; it did not appear to have ears. Two tube-like projections extended twenty centimeters from the center of the face.

It seemed like an hour to Allan, but could have been only minutes, before the creature abruptly bent its head, inserted the two thin tubes into the fluid accumulated on a stigma, and drank. Through the almost transparent walls of chitin he saw the thick syrup flow slowly upward. The butterfly fed until the cup seemed empty, then calmly shifted to another. It took almost five minutes to drain both. When it was through, the golden head lifted and the large eyes once more met Allan's. Suddenly he felt dizzy again, this time so strongly that he seemed to be losing consciousness. Afraid of falling, he leaned forward until his torso lay flat across the yielding fronds. His legs were too weak to grip the bole, and an abrupt change in the wind would tear him loose, but dark shadows were flickering at the edge of his sight, ready to overwhelm him. Allan closed his eyes and waited passively for the weakness to either fade or conquer him.

It did neither. Allan became acutely conscious of the sweet smell of the nectar cups, the springy support of the fronds, the pressure of the breeze on his face . . . he realized that he had been receiving these sensory messages all along, at a lower level of awareness. Then the smell of nectar seemed to turn into taste . . . he felt the touch of simple sugars on his tongue . . . the waving fronds seemed to move more regularly, as though changed to beating wings . . . he felt the support of the wind on his body, knew he could hurl himself forward, ride the air currents upward into the high pure sky, clean and free . . . he spread his arms . . .

And the dizziness faded. He opened his eyes, vision still blurred, to find his gaze locked on the multifaceted glitter of the butterfly's compound orbs. The blurriness disappeared; he realized that his arms were lying limply on the fronds, and with a return of his earlier fear, gripped the rough stems with both

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hands. The calmly impersonal eyes regarded him without anger or fear. And then the lifted wings lowered and fanned out, caught the strong windbore immediately, and tore the many clinging feet from the swaying frond. It came directly at Allan, the great spread of the thin wings blotting out the sky. He ducked his head and gripped with both hands and legs, and the small feet brushed his hair as the long body passed directly over him. Allan turned and watched the beautiful insect rising slowly into the sky, wings spread to the maximum. Another appeared from the side and joined it, and abruptly both turned into the wind and began riding it swiftly upwards, circling and wheeling around each other.

Allan watched until the two were only small black dots, still rapidly rising, in the vastness of the wind-torn sky. He slowly filled three more vials with pollen and tissue samples and started down the rough trunk. The windbore had died while he worked, and the huge flower swayed sickeningly with every vagrant breeze, making the descent far harder than the climb. Safely on the ground again, Allan drew a deep breath of relief. As a Conscience he had to keep himself in good condition, but he was past forty and a little on the heavy side. He was also a former teacher, not a man of action, not particularly brave, and well aware of it. He was always badly shaken by close calls, although he had been near death often during his assignments on primitive worlds. There were times when Allan wondered if the P.P. Corps hadn't made a mistake in selecting him. But somehow he had lasted ten years, while better men and women died in service, and been promoted to one of the three new positions of sector chief.

Allan felt fully recovered by the time he reached the small settlement. The second and last communal meal had been eaten, but the cooks found enough for him. Secret was already at the Bartolini house. He made his way there just as the short twilight faded into darkness and found the projector set up and ready. Astrid ran the film immediately, and Allan studied it intently. He saw nothing in the elaborate courtship ritual that indicated whether intelligence or simple instinct was at work. On Earth some types of herons went through equally complex formalities before mating, and though the dance patterns were beautiful, he had seen similar ones performed by insects on other worlds.

Both Astrid and Pat stood up when the film ended, and Allan realized that this was a direct hint. With only seven hours of night available, these people went to bed early. They said good night, and Allan and Secret returned to the guest cottage. The second night was even better than the first, and when their radio awoke them at dawn, Allan

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had to exert all his will power to get out of bed. Secret grumbled and complained when he shook her but finally crawled out and into her brief skirt.

After a hasty breakfast they loaded their gear into one of the colony's two powered gliders and wheeled it out of the foamfab hangar. Two men Pat had sent to help get them off the ground held the light craft by its long wings until a steady breeze appeared. Secret, the more experienced pilot, opened the throttle and ran into the wind. The plane rolled for less than thirty meters before clearing the ground, and though it dipped badly once, she managed to keep it aloft. In five minutes they were just below the area of high turbulence that separated the jetstreams from the lower air, and she banked and turned to the west. At that altitude the wind pushed against the plane one moment but aided them the next, and they averaged almost two hundred kilometers an hour.

Looking down, Allan was impressed again with the fact that Beauty had been well titled. There were no clouds here and no rain; a very heavy dew condensed out of the air and watered the thronging vegetation every night. The plants lived in constant motion, yielding to each erratic wind, and the petals of uncounted billions of flowers swayed and bent in stately rhythms. The entire surface of the world seemed to be alive beneath the plane. In a little over two hours Secret started losing altitude, looking for an open place to land. They had passed a few foothills and were over a grassy plateau that abutted a low old mountain range, as green as the rest of Beauty. She found a level spot free of brush and touched down without difficulty. Allan was out of the small cabin the instant the plane stopped rolling, holding the craft by the crossbar between the wheels. Secret tumbled out behind him and hastily drove tie-down pegs at front and back.

Allan's backpack was large, Secret's much smaller. It was a little before noon when they started walking. There were only scattered patches of brush at this elevation, and they made good time. The swift twilight caught them just as they rounded the flank of Charlemagne. Secret prepared a hasty meal from concentrates while Allan inflated their sleeping bags. It was quite dark when they finished eating and both were bone-tired, but Secret shared his bed for a few minutes before getting into hers. When the sun awoke them after what seemed only a nap, Allan understood why the colonists retired early.

Before noon they were behind Charlemagne, and for the first time Allan saw bare ground on Beauty. It stretched directly ahead of them to several small vapor-covered lakes, apparently fed by the sulphur springs. When the vagrant breezes blew toward them, their noses were

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

assaulted by an odor like rotten eggs. Allan saw several large stone ridges crossing the valley floor, and the closest lake was bordered by one on the right. The winds seemed milder here and the temperature higher.

Not a butterfly was in sight. Allan decided to start their search at the nearby lake and picked a path toward it. In thirty minutes they were standing on the shore, staring out over the misty water. The lake was at least four kilometers wide, with the far side hidden in the thick haze.

"Allan, there's a cave," said Secret, pointing to the stony ridge. "It's the first I've seen on Beauty."

Allan looked to their right and saw a low dark shadow extending twenty meters across the face of the rock. At the center it seemed at least two meters high, but was less than one at the water's edge. It was difficult to see through the mist, and the high heat was making Allan uncomfortable. He led Secret toward the ridge at the point where it met the shore, the cave being as good a place as any to look for dead butterflies.

And they found them.

The elephant graveyard of old Africa was a myth. The butterfly burial ground was real. Hurt or dying elephants could hardly travel hundreds of miles to a single spot; the butterflies could. A picture had started forming in Allan's mind, and the examination of a few dead bodies confirmed it. Corpse after corpse was dry, drained of all substance, with the cracked eggshells of the eater still clinging to the chitinous exterior. The floor was littered with the dry husks of long-dead adults, and as Allan straightened up from his fourth examination, he saw a small, weak figure emerge from the deep shadows at the rear. It was a baby butterfly, crawling slowly and painfully on his hundred feet.

Allan motioned for Secret to leave the crawler alone, and they watched silently as it struggled to the opening above the water, the baby wings unfolding as it neared the light. At the edge it paused, testing the almost motionless air. It was stiflingly hot in the cave, the trapped vapor from the lake providing both heat and moisture. But the persistent breezes of Beauty reached even here, and after a moment there was a stir of air at the entrance. The baby suddenly launched itself out over the water, dipping at first until it almost touched but then rising swiftly as it gained speed and the updraft lifted the light body. In seconds it was out of sight in the mist.

The butterfly life cycle both began and ended here, in one of the few places on Beauty where the restless winds could not steal away the heat needed for hatching. There were probably other caves nearby, and other hot lakes around the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

planet, but they would only be duplicates. The picture that had been forming in Allan's mind was complete.

Even so, he needed proof. Allan slipped off his backpack and knelt at the head of a newly dead butterfly. He opened the bag, found his laser pistol, and adjusted the beam for short-range cutting. Two maximum length burns cut through the thorax just behind the head. Secret watched in silence as Allan wrapped the round ball in his jacket and stuffed it in the pack, but when he started toward the shore, she hastily followed. Once safely on the ground and away from the wet heat, Allan immediately felt better.

"Do you want to look around the other lakes for more hatcheries?" asked Secret. Allan noticed that there was a new respect in her voice. "We have enough time before dark."

"Yes, though I'm certain we'll just find more of the same," said Allan. And two hours later, when they turned and started back toward their glider, he had been proven right. The other caves were of different sizes and locations; but all were heated by proximity to the water and all contained the bodies of adult butterflies. They had seen one female attaching her eggs to a dead male, and Allan noticed that when her chore was finished, she too crawled off into a corner to die. The males returned here solely to furnish food for the young; the females came back as their last act after their egg sacs were fertilized. As with many insect species, that probably meant many more females than males were born.

It was rapidly growing dark and both were exhausted when they reached the slopes of Charlemagne again. Allan insisted they keep moving until it was no longer safe to travel. The shadows were deep at the point where a ridge from the mountain on their right forced them to follow a narrow defile past Charlemagne. It was the deceptive lighting that saved Allan's life when a laser beam lashed down from high on the slope to their left and burned a hole in the ground behind him.

Allan had been shot at before, and though he was not a soldier, he had acquired the reflexes of one. He leaped backward instantly, and the second beam from the ridge on their right seared the air where he had been. Allan continued his motion by catching Secret about the waist and pushing her hard to the side. She lost her balance after two running steps and fell sprawling, but her torso was behind the rock he had selected. Allan left his own feet in a dive as the first man shot again, hit rolling, and saw the hot beam burn grass behind him. He stopped behind Secret and scrambled to her side; the rock was barely large enough to hide them.

Allan got to his knees, slipped off his pack, and dug out the laser pistol. He adjusted the beam to its

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

longest range. Fatigue had vanished, dispelled by a surge of adrenalin into his bloodstream, and his mind was racing. Now that a try had been made to kill two P.P.'s, the ambushers had to finish the job and hide the bodies. If the attempt on their lives became known, the Space Service would never rest until the killers were found. The would-be murderers had to come after them, and though they had no way of knowing Allan had a laser, they would take no chances.

The twilight gloom was rapidly fading into darkness. Allan placed his lips against Secret's ear and said, "We'll sneak back into the valley in a minute. Is there any other way out?"

She shifted her head and whispered, "Yes, we can go around Charlemagne on the opposite side, but it would take days. We'd need food and water."

"And you can bet they disabled the glider," Allan said grimly. He cautiously looked around the rock on the opposite side, but could see nothing in the dimness. As he started to draw back, he heard a faint scraping noise, as of a boot sliding along a rock wall. At least one of their attackers was climbing down to the level ground. It was time to leave.

A new hazard occurred to Allan, and he swiftly muttered some emergency instructions to Secret. They crawled backward, keeping the rock between themselves and the danger in front as long as possible. When he finally stood and took Secret's hand to lead the way, he could barely see enough to avoid large boulders. They moved quickly but quietly for several meters, and suddenly a light flared behind them. Allan looked back and saw the area behind the rock that had sheltered them brightly illuminated. There was a yell from the man holding the light, and then it moved and swung toward them. Secret hurled herself to the left as Allan had instructed, while he went right and snapped off a shot at the light. He missed but had the satisfaction of hearing a startled cry and seeing the light go out.

"Come on!" Allan said urgently, reversing himself and going after Secret. He found her immediately and led the way again, walking rapidly but quietly. By the time the man with the light found a secure place and turned on his beam again, they had moved behind a rock buttress and were out of sight.

Allan had been thinking as they walked, considering the alternatives. Knowing now that he was armed, the killers were unlikely to come after them until morning. When they came they would be slow and cautious. They probably knew there was no drinkable water in the valley and could be certain their intended victims had little left in their canteens. Even if the two P.P.'s managed to walk around Charlemagne on the opposite side,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they would still face an impossible trek through the dense brush. Unless help came from the colony—and Allan had a strong hunch none would come in time—the killers could hunt them down at their leisure.

Allan stopped, slipped off the pack, and sat on it to remove his boots. He stuffed them and the canteen inside and handed it to Secret. "Cross to the opposite side, climb up among the rocks, and hide. If I don't make it back, wait until they pass in the morning and walk to the glider. You'll have enough water and food to last until help comes."

"But Allan! What are you going to do?"

"What they least expect; go after them," he said calmly and turned and walked rapidly away before she could protest.

Allan cautiously rounded the corner they had just turned and was not surprised to see the light still on ahead. The hard rock was rough on his bare feet, and he bruised himself several times but ignored the pain. As he drew closer he heard voices and saw that there were only two men and that they were arguing over what to do, as he had expected. He dropped to his knees and crept forward, trying to keep near enough to shelter to dodge if the light should suddenly sweep his way. When he reached the last rock large enough to protect him, he crouched behind it and eased his head and the laser around the right side. The two men were standing where he and Secret had huddled, still talking. They agreed on what they would do just as Allan drew a bead on the one holding the light.

And paused.

And realized that he could not deliberately kill a man. It was ridiculous—these two were obviously professional assassins, men who had shot at them without warning and would kill instantly if the advantage were theirs—but nevertheless he could not slay except by bad aim in the heat of battle. His inability had nothing to do with what the men were—it was the way he himself was made.

With a sigh, Allan shifted his aim and burned a crippling hole in the thigh of the man with the lamp.

There was a scream of pain, and the light fell and clattered along the rock floor. The second man turned and ran, but there was no shelter handy, and the lamp had stopped with him in its glow. He attempted to run around the large rock. Allan fired a second time, at the largest nonfatal target he could see. The hot beam caught the man in the right buttock.

The small crystal in a hand laser had to cool for five seconds between pulses, leaving Allan defenseless when he sprang to his feet and started for the two downed men. But it also took a few seconds for the worst affects of shock to hit a severely burned person. The first man had his hand on his holster but

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seemed unable to open it. Allan kicked him in the head as he went by. The second had his pistol in hand but was trying to crawl behind the rock, expecting a finishing shot when the five seconds were up. Allan caught the weapon with his toe and heard it sliding across the rock, out of sight. He turned back instantly to the first killer, ready to shoot if necessary, and saw that the kick had sent him on into unconsciousness.

Allan picked up the light, took the first man's pistol, and after a short hunt found the second weapon. A brief search located the standard issue knife each man had in his spaceman's emergency kit. Then he yelled to Secret that it was safe to join him.

The short blonde stared at the groaning man trying to see the hole in his buttock, and the second one lying unconscious, with something like awe. "Holy life, Allan, I didn't know you could fight like that! I always thought you were a little . . . on the mild side. I mean I loved you anyway, but once out of your classroom. . . ."

Allan grinned in the darkness. This was probably the best-handled combat he had ever engaged in, but he was not going to tell an admiring woman that. "I've learned a lot not taught in school during ten years," he said instead. "But save the praise for later; let's find out who these two are."

When he had the would-be assassins awake and propped up on elbows facing the light, Allan learned one interesting fact immediately. Both were Earthmen and neither was from the colony. A brief search while Secret held the light and gun gave him the answer. They were out-of-uniform members of the Space Service.

Allan stared at the sullen men in deep anger. The fact that anyone would try to kill a Conscience was bad; that they were from the force supposed to protect Consciences was far worse.

After an hour of futile questioning, Allan realized that the two were not going to talk except under torture. There was nothing he could do except send a security party from the colony to bring them in. As he had expected, there was a part from the glider's power plant in one man's emergency pack and a crystal from the radio in the other.

"You two are going to be left here for a couple of days to think over your troubles," Allan finally told them. "I don't think you can get far, and I wouldn't advise you to hide; your packs don't hold much water. The penalty for killing a Conscience is death, as you well know, but since you didn't succeed, maybe they'll let you off with twenty years."

The men refused to answer or even meet his eyes. Allan finally donned his pack again and led Secret a kilometer toward the glider before stopping for what remained

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the night. When the first light awoke them, he felt as if he hadn't slept at all, and it took a distinct effort of will to struggle erect. And for the first night since arriving, he and Secret had not shared sex.

By noon they were back at the glider. Allan had the stolen parts installed and the machine operable within five minutes, but it was better than an hour before the vagrant winds finally died long enough to let him hastily cut the tie-downs and jump aboard. Taking off on rough ground and without a headwind was very dangerous in the underpowered craft, but there was no other way. The wind started again as the wheels cleared, a strong gust from the rear that immediately cost the plane lift and set them bumping along on the grass. They were near the end of the clear area and had to get airborne at once or try to stop and turn back into the wind, a dangerous procedure. Secret made her decision and kept going. The rough brush that could tear the light craft apart drew rapidly closer, and Allan gripped his seat in horrified fascination. But Secret knew what she was doing. The following breeze died and was instantly replaced by one from ahead and to the left. She swung the plane squarely into it, and almost instantly they cleared and rose ten meters, and within twenty seconds, thirty more. And then they had enough speed to be independent of the wind and were safe.

"Are you going to call Arcan?" Secret asked as they settled down for the slow trip back.

Captain Arcan was the commanding officer of the Space Service neverlander that had brought Allan, now waiting in orbit overhead. But Allan knew every man on board the ship, and their two attackers had not been part of the crew. "No, I want to find out what's happened at the colony first," he replied, and despite Secret's obvious curiosity, he refused to discuss his plans. Two hours later, as they descended through the lower turbulence to land, he had the satisfaction of confirming an expectation. There was a second shuttle standing not far from the one that had brought him down.

"Brigadier General Timothy Terhune," said Allan, pointing. "I think you can guess why he's here."

"Then those were *his* men!" said Secret, alarm in her voice.

"Don't mention them at all; let me do the talking for the P.P. Corps," Allan said urgently as they descended toward the landing field. "That's an official order as well as a personal request, sweetheart."

Secret was too busy with the controls to answer, but Allan saw the quick anger on her face. It faded as the wheels touched and cleared again in a heavy gust, and she concentrated on getting them down alive.

He could only hope she would

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

remember the order after the anger faded.

The wings were caught and the craft pulled into the hangar by two men in Space Service blue. When the door cut off the wind behind them, they stepped out and were asked to report at once to the colony administration building. One of the patrolmen served as an escort, staying slightly behind Allan as if only accompanying them. Inside the low open building where Pat maintained his official desk, they encountered several men in Service blue, hurrying about various tasks. The plump colony administrator was sitting on a foamfab couch, his face slightly pale. Behind his desk was a tall gray-haired officer in formal dress, issuing a rapid stream of orders. One white Space Service star glittered on his shoulder.

Their escort nodded politely at the couch, and they joined Pat and waited for the general to notice them. Within five minutes the building was empty except for themselves and a guard, and General Terhune finally rose and advanced around the desk with hand extended. His grip was firm and his deep crisp voice cordial when he said, "Very happy to meet you, Conscience Odegaard. I've heard nothing but good about you, and I was delighted to hear you'd been chosen as one of the P.P. sector chiefs. Congratulations, and I hope you can help me straighten out the mess we have here."

Allan formally introduced Secret and then asked what had happened since they had left two days before. The tall officer smiled and said, "I had received instructions to prepare this planet for six-hundred new colonists before Conscience Holmes declared the butterflies intelligent. They are now on their way. Since I've been hearing bad reports on Administrator Bartolini and the lack of progress here, I came to see for myself, and it's even worse than I expected. To simplify the legalities, I've declared martial law on this planet and assumed command myself. We intend to be ready for those new people. I'm shipping Bartolini back to Earth tomorrow with a full report on the situation and a request to the Colonization Department that he be permanently reassigned. I am going to send Conscience Holmes back with him, but only because she needs to appear before the World Council and defend her decision to abandon this planet. You are free to accompany her, if you wish, or resume your duties elsewhere until the issue here is resolved."

"Under Space Service regulations," Allan said slowly, "when martial law is declared all reserve officers automatically assume their active rank. Secret becomes a colonel, and I am a brigadier general. Therefore . . ."

"Therefore nothing," Terhune cut him off quickly and smoothly. "I am your senior by about twenty

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

years, as well as commanding officer of this sector. You are under my authority as long as you work within my jurisdiction."

Terhune was right, and there was nothing Allan could do at the moment. The general had the authority and certainly the power. "Very well. I am performing an evaluation of Conscience Holmes' report and would like to continue my work. I'll let you know in the morning if I wish to accompany her back to Earth."

"Fine. In the meantime, Mr. Bartolini, I suggest you pack your personal effects, excluding official records which I am going to keep. I'll see all of you in the morning."

When they stepped outside, the sun was setting. Allan and Secret walked the subdued Pat to his house. To their surprise, they saw his bags already packed and Astrid sprawled comfortably on the big couch, swinging one long leg. Buck Terhune was sitting in the solid foamfab chair.

The big woman rose to greet them, and Allan was again impressed by the sheer size and magnificence of her body. "I want you to sleep in the new-arrivals' house tonight, Pat," she said immediately. "If you insist on staying here, I'll go with Buck. To preserve what little respect your friends here may have left for you . . ."

Pat stopped as though struck. Allan glanced at his face and had to look away.

After a long moment of silence, Pat said slowly, "I thought there was someone else, but Buck Terhune . . . why did you do it, Astrid?"

She glanced at Allan and Secret, obviously disturbed by their presence, but finally said, "I'm tired of mothering a boy; I want a man for a change. And Buck will be the new administrator when General Terhune leaves."

"I didn't know the prestige meant that much to you. Well, we live and learn. Certainly I'll stay in the guest house; I wouldn't want to disturb you two. Have fun."

Pat grabbed two bags, as Allan reached for the third, and almost ran from the room. The two P.P.'s left the broken man in the guest house and returned to Secret's quarters, where Allan immediately seized the nectar and plant samples he had obtained two days earlier and turned to leave again.

"Where the hell are you going?" Secret asked in surprise.

"To the lab; I want to run an analysis on the head and these plant tissues. Try to get some sleep; I may need you before morning."

"But—but what are you going to *do*, Allan?" she demanded in exasperation.

Secret was questioning more than his wish to run a chemical analysis. Allan slipped an arm around her bare shoulders and said, "Unless there's a second Buck Terhune around, I'm going to keep fight-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing." And he kissed her quickly and left.

Just before dawn Allan found the answer. He got Secret and Pat out of bed and with their help rolled the glider they had used out of the hangar. He took off into the next steady breeze, wondering if a laser beam would come out of the darkness to send him crashing in flames. None did, and as the rapid dawn paled the sky in the east, he set a course for Mount Charlemagne.

Allan found the two military assassins where he had left them, comfortable and with their wounds treated, but with empty canteens. He wrote out a confession for each and realized when they almost contemptuously refused to sign them that they were expecting to be rescued at any moment. Obviously a shuttle from the general's neverlander had touched down around Charlemagne's flank, out of sight and hearing of the two P.P.'s, and they had walked in. Their rendezvous time had passed, and the shuttle crew would be looking for them.

There was no way he could coerce the two men into signing. Allan accepted the inevitable, searched their emergency kits again, and left his water canteen when he walked away. Once out of their sight, he calmly signed both confessions himself, using the names he had seen on the fatigues they had stuffed into their kits when they donned civilian clothes.

The landing had not been too dangerous—Allan had gained some skill in estimating the probable duration of a ground wind by watching the degree of yield in the vegetation—but the takeoff was more difficult. After thinking it over, he redid his ground straps so that they could be released by a single tug and ran lines from each to a rope that he took into the small cabin. In less than five minutes the breeze changed until it was blowing directly at the light plane. Allan opened the throttle and yanked on the release cord. He had to steer with one hand while pulling in the rope and closing the cabin door, and the light craft veered sharply to the right. He corrected just as a long wing almost touched the grass and picked up enough speed to barely clear the ground at the edge of the brush. Fortunately the wind held, and he was soon safe in the slow air stream below the turbulent layer.

It was only a little after noon when Allan landed again at High Hope. The earlier excitement and bustle had died away, but there was now an armed guard at the hangar. He helped Allan roll the plane inside and said, "General Terhune would like to see you in the administration building, sir."

Allan nodded and left for the inevitable confrontation. He was not surprised to see Secret and Pat there when he entered the round

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

building. In the careful game of power politics the general was playing, it seemed unlikely he would have sent them away before learning why Allan had left and what he was after.

"Good afternoon, General Odegaard," the Service officer rose and greeted him with formal correctness. "I placed no restriction on your movements last night, having no idea you were planning a trip. In the future please obtain my personal permission before leaving High Hope."

"Certainly, sir," Allan agreed, glancing around the room. There were no guards, but the general's adjutant, a colonel, sat at the next desk. "I'm happy to see you haven't sent Conscience Holmes to Earth yet, since her planned trip is no longer necessary. I am reversing her decision."

There was a brittle silence, electric with tension. Allan looked at Secret and saw her turn white with shock, but she held her peace. The adjutant stopped work and stared at his commander. Allan could almost see the mental gears turning as the general absorbed the unexpected blow. After a moment he said, "Ah, I can't permit a change at this point, Conscience Odegaard. Since the formal declaration by Conscience Holmes and my override order have already gone to the World Council . . ."

"I am withdrawing her declaration; there is no need for your countermanding order, sir. To be absolutely clear and explicit, I will file a new declaration, stating unequivocally that the butterflies are unintelligent insects."

"And, ah, how did you arrive at this conclusion?" the general asked, as though feeling his way.

"Simple enough, sir. On our trip of two days ago Conscience Holmes and I obtained for the first time the head of a dead butterfly, from a hatchery the creatures use in the nearby mountains. I dissected the head last night and learned that they have the enlarged anterior ganglia common to insects and not a true brain. It is literally impossible for a butterfly to be intelligent."

Secret jumped to her feet. "Then how do you account for their communicating with us!" she demanded angrily; her face had gone from white to red.

"We'll get to that in a moment," Allan said, his voice controlled. "Please sit down and don't interrupt again."

Secret opened her mouth as though to protest, and Allan turned his profile to the two officers and gave her a wink with the hidden eye. Still disturbed, she reluctantly sat down.

"There's another matter I'd like to bring to your attention, sir," Allan went on. He produced the two handwritten papers from his pocket. "I have here two signed confessions from members of your

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ship's crew who attempted to kill Conscience Holmes and me as we were leaving the butterfly hatchery. Both state they were acting on your direct orders, with the understanding that they were to wear civilian clothes and there would be no military record of the executions."

General Terhune, still standing, perceptibly stiffened. The adjutant caught his breath in an audible gasp. Allan saw his hand creeping toward his holstered pistol.

"I used the aircraft's radio to send these charges, in code, to Captain Arcan, and they are now a matter of record on Earth," Allan went on, his voice shaking slightly. "I don't know how thoroughly you have your men indoctrinated, but I find it impossible to believe there could be more than a few like the two assassins you sent against us. I respectfully request that you surrender your command to me, as next senior officer in the sector, and accept quarters arrest until you can be returned to Earth for trial."

The adjutant's hand was openly on his laser. He looked questioningly at his superior, whose face had turned pale. The general's voice trembled when he said, "I'll see you in hell first, sir!"

"There is no legal way I can force you to surrender your command," Allan went on, his voice becoming steady as he saw how badly he had hurt Terhune. "But I assure you a message will arrive within the next few hours ordering you to turn command over to your adjutant and report back to Earth. P.P. Administrator Wilson has direct contact with the World Council President."

The general's color had returned. "This is the worst nonsense I've ever heard in my life!" he said in a loud voice and turned to the adjutant. "Place all three of them under arrest! I want them confined and guarded until further notice."

"Colonel, if you draw that laser, I'll charge you as an accessory after the fact," Allan said, turning to the other officer. "It will be the end of your career."

The colonel, his hand already on the butt of the pistol, hesitated. Allan saw calculation on his face as he tried to weigh the odds, and he realized that the man was not privy to the general's plans. He was not surprised. The Space Service was an elite military force, and not even a sector commander could hide more than a few professional killers in the ranks.

"I think you know that your plan to discredit the P.P. Corps hasn't worked, General Terhune," Allan said to the stiffly erect officer. "It was an ingenious scheme—beautiful animals that passed for intelligent although your brother had discovered their hatchery and knew otherwise, a ruling by a Conscience that you could override and take to the World Council knowing you would win—but it has failed. You had to attempt to eliminate us after

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we discovered the butterfly life cycle because you knew I'd countermand Secret's order and ruin your chance to make the Corps look ridiculous. And during my recent visit to Earth, I heard a rumor that could explain what was in it for you. You're ready to retire after thirty years, with no higher rank than brigadier despite all your work for New Roman causes. Your associates in the party promised you a senator's seat on the World Council if you discredited us, didn't they? Loomis of Florida is ready to retire, and that's your home state and a safe Roman district."

The way the suddenly stricken man almost wilted before their eyes told Allan that his guess had been correct. The colonel's hand had moved away from his holster, and his face showed that he now believed Allan.

"Those confessions will never hold up in court," the general said feebly. "The men will retract them tomorrow."

"Probably," Allan agreed. "But it doesn't matter. You'll retire after the investigation, and you won't run for political office. I realize that I can't put you in jail where you belong, but your career is over. General—I suggest you start packing."

"You mean the butterflies have to *die*?" Secret asked, horrified.

"I'm afraid so," Allan replied. They were back in the guest house, where he had been telling Secret and Pat of his discoveries. "The tall trees must come down over the entire planet, and with their only source of food gone, the butterflies will vanish. It's always regrettable to see a species die, and of course we'll analyze every molecule in a few specimens to be certain no biochemicals of possible value are lost. But the need for habitable planets is acute; we do well just to preserve the ones with species that show budding intelligence. And I think Beauty can easily spare the trees. The pollen from their flowers is so fine that it passes through lung tissue directly into the body, where it has the same effect as a mild opiate. Chemically, it resembles serotonin and is almost impossible to isolate once it's in the bloodstream. You can fight off the effect—Buck Terhune did—but it takes a lot of will power. The people here have been working in a mild state of euphoria since the colony was founded, which explains why they've accomplished so little."

"And the communication with the butterflies? You haven't explained that," said Secret.

"That was a puzzler," admitted Allan. "I found the answer when I ran the flower-tree tissue samples through the analyzer. There were traces of a second type of pollen. I got the clothes I wore while climbing and found quite a bit more clinging to them. It seems that these trees are male and female,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and only the female pollen gets scattered freely by the wind. The butterflies fertilize them by carrying pollen from the male to the female during their feeding, in the same manner as smaller flying insects. Both are mild opiates, but when you combine them you get a strong hallucinogenic drug, where only a tiny touch will have you hallucinating. When you stand downwind from a butterfly, you're very likely to get both at once. The primary effect is to heighten your awareness of bodily sensations from below to above the threshold of consciousness. The images and sensations you feel are those of your own body, not nonverbal communication with a butterfly."

"So I get to keep my job, even though I've lost my wife," Pat said musingly.

"I'm afraid not," Allan said.

Pat stood up, carefully placed the glass he had been holding on the table, and walked out the door.

"Allan! Was that necessary?" Secret demanded the instant the plump man was out of hearing.

"I'm afraid it was. Pat is a very nice guy, but no administrator. I'm going to recommend that Terhune's order removing him stand. There's no excuse for this situation having dragged on this long. And I'm going to ask that Buck Terhune be recalled, of course. I could never prove conspiracy, but my word alone should be enough to get him sent back to Earth. I can't prove Astrid threw that poisonous seed at me either, though I'm certain that she either did it herself or told Buck where we'd be. They deserve each other. And that leaves only you."

"Me!"

"Yes, you. Surely you realize that your work on the original decision was less than satisfactory?"

"No, I damn well don't! What do you think you are, a little infallible genius? When I think of the way I pulled you through Alien Psychology and some of the compromises you've arranged on other worlds—why, damn you!"

She was on her feet facing him, breathlessly angry. Suddenly feeling very old and tired, and with no trace at all of genius, Allan rose and said, "Your performance was poor. You let the Terhune brothers sucker you into the decision they wanted while the facts were in front of you. The New Romans gain seats in every election. This could have been the start of a drive to discredit the Corps that would have ended with a Roman majority in the World Council. I'm not going to recommend you be recalled—your past record is too good for that—but I have no choice but to give you a low rating."

Allan followed Pat into the night. But he had taken only a few steps when there was a rush of feet behind him, and a sobbing Secret tackled him neatly around the knees and brought him crashing to the ground.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE EUREKA PHENOMENON

by Isaac Asimov

IN THE OLD DAYS, WHEN I WAS WRITING a great deal of fiction, there would come, once in a while, moments when I was stymied. Suddenly, I would find I had written myself into a hole and could see no way out. To take care of that, I developed a technique which invariably worked.

It was simply this—I went to the movies. Not just any movie. I had to pick a movie that was loaded with action but which made no demands on the intellect. As I watched, I did my best to avoid any conscious thinking concerning my problem, and when I came out of the movie I knew exactly what I would have to do to put the story back on the track.

It never failed.

In fact, when I was working on my doctoral dissertation, too many years ago, I suddenly came across a flaw in my logic that I had not noticed before and that knocked out everything I had done. In utter panic, I made my way to a Bob Hope movie—and came out with the necessary change in point of view.

It is my belief, you see, that thinking is a double-phenomenon, like breathing.

You can control breathing by deliberate voluntary action; you can breathe deeply and quickly, or you can hold your breath altogether, regardless of the body's needs at the time. This, however, doesn't work well for very long. Your chest muscles grow tired, your body clamors for more oxygen, or less, and you relax. The automatic involuntary control of breathing takes over, adjusts it to the body's needs, and unless you have some respiratory disorder, you can forget about the whole thing.

Well, you can think by deliberate voluntary action, too, and I don't think it is much more efficient on the whole, than voluntary breath-control is. You can deliberately force your mind through channels of deductions

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and associations in search of a solution to some problem, and before long you have dug mental furrows for yourself and find yourself circling round and round the same limited pathways. If those pathways yield no solution, no amount of further conscious thought will help.

On the other hand, if you let go, then the thinking process comes under automatic involuntary control and is more apt to take new pathways and make erratic associations you would not think of consciously. The solution will then come while you *think* you are *not* thinking.

The trouble is, though, that conscious thought involves no muscular action, and so there is no sensation of physical weariness that would force you to quit. What's more, the panic of necessity tends to force you to go on uselessly, with each added bit of useless effort adding to the panic in a vicious cycle.

It is my feeling that it helps to deliberately relax by subjecting your mind to material complicated enough to occupy the voluntary faculty of thought, but superficial enough not to engage the deeper involuntary one. In my case, it is an action movie; in your case, it might be something else.

I suspect it is the involuntary faculty of thought that gives rise to what we call "a flash of intuition," something that I imagine must be merely the result of unnoticed thinking.

Perhaps the most famous flash of intuition in the history of science took place in the city of Syracuse in 3rd Century B.C. Sicily. Bear with me and I will tell you the story—

About 250 B.C., the city of Syracuse was experiencing a kind of Golden Age. It was under the protection of the rising power of Rome, but it retained a king of its own and considerable self-government; it was prosperous; and it had a flourishing intellectual life.

The king was Hieron II, and he had commissioned a new golden crown from a goldsmith to whom he had given an ingot of gold as raw material. Hieron, being a practical man, had carefully weighed the ingot and then weighed the crown he received back. The two weights were precisely equal. Good deal!

But then he sat and thought for a while. Suppose the goldsmith had subtracted a little bit of the gold—not too much—and had substituted an equal weight of the considerably less valuable copper. The resulting alloy would still have the appearance of pure gold, but the goldsmith would be plus a quantity of gold over and above his fee. He would be buying gold with copper, so to speak, and Hieron would be neatly cheated.

Hieron didn't like the thought of being cheated anymore than you or I would, but he didn't know how to find out for sure that he had been. He

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

could scarcely punish the goldsmith on mere suspicion. What to do?

Fortunately, Hieron had an advantage few rulers in the history of the world could boast. He had a relative of considerable talent. The relative was named Archimedes, and he probably had the greatest intellect the world was to see prior to the birth of Newton.

Archimedes was called in and was posed the problem. He had to determine whether the crown Hieron showed him was pure gold, or was gold to which a small but significant quantity of copper had been added.

If we were to reconstruct Archimedes' reasoning, it might go as follows. Gold was the densest known substance (at that time). Its density in modern terms is 19.3 grams per cubic centimeter. This means that a given weight of gold takes up less volume than the same weight of anything else! In fact, a given weight of pure gold takes up less volume than the same weight of *any* kind of impure gold known at that time.

The density of copper is 8.92 grams per cubic centimeter, just about half that of gold. If we consider 100 grams of pure gold, for instance, it is easy to calculate it to have a volume of 5.18 cubic centimeters. But suppose the 100 grams of what looked like pure gold was really only 90 grams of gold and 10 grams of copper. The 90 grams of gold would have a volume of 4.66 cubic centimeters, while the 10 grams of copper would have a volume of 1.12 cubic centimeters; for a total value of 5.78 cubic centimeters.

The difference between 5.18 cubic centimeters and 5.78 cubic centimeters is quite a noticeable one, and would instantly tell if the crown were of pure gold, or if it contained 10 percent copper (with the missing 10 percent of gold tucked neatly in the goldsmith's strongbox).

All one had to do, then, was measure the volume of the crown and compare it with the volume of the same weight of pure gold.

The mathematics of the time made it easy to measure the volume of many simple shapes; a cube, a sphere, a cone, a cylinder, any flattened object of simple regular shape and known thickness, and so on.

We can imagine Archimedes saying, "All that is necessary, Sire, is to pound that crown flat, shape it into a square of uniform thickness, and then I can have the answer for you in a moment."

Whereupon Hieron must certainly have snatched the crown away and said, "No such thing. I can do that much without you; I've studied the principles of mathematics, too. This crown is a highly satisfactory work of art, and I won't have it damaged. Just calculate its volume without in any way altering it."

But Greek mathematics had no way of determining the volume of anything with a shape as irregular as the crown, since integral calculus had not yet been invented (and wouldn't be for almost two thousand years). Archi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

medes would have had to say, "There is no known way, Sire, to carry through a non-destructive determination of volume."

"Then think of one," said Hieron testily.

And Archimedes must have set about thinking of one, and gotten nowhere. Nobody knows how long he thought, or how hard, or what hypotheses he considered and discarded, or any of the details.

What we do know is that, worn out with thinking, Archimedes decided to visit the public baths and relax. I think we are quite safe in saying that Archimedes had no intention of taking his problem to the baths with him. It would be ridiculous to imagine he would, for the public baths of a Greek metropolis weren't intended for that sort of thing.

The Greek baths were a place for relaxation. Half the social aristocracy of the town would be there, and there was a great deal more to do than wash. One steamed one's self, got a massage, exercised, and engaged in general socializing. We can be sure that Archimedes intended to forget the stupid crown for a while.

One can envisage him engaging in light talk, discussing the latest news from Alexandria and Carthage, the latest scandals in town, the latest funny jokes at the expense of the country-squire Romans—and then he lowered himself into a nice hot bath which some bumbling attendant had filled too full.

The water in the bath slopped over as Archimedes got in. Did Archimedes notice that at once, or did he sigh, sink back, and paddle his feet awhile before noting the water-slop. I guess the latter. But, whether soon or late, he noticed, and that one fact, added to all the chains of reasoning his brain had been working on during the period of relaxation when it was unhampered by the comparative stupidities (even in Archimedes) of voluntary thought, gave Archimedes his answer in one blinding flash of insight.

Jumping out of the bath, he proceeded to run home at top speed through the streets of Syracuse. He did *not* bother to put on his clothes. The thought of Archimedes running naked through Syracuse has titillated dozens of generations of youngsters who have heard this story, but I must explain that the ancient Greeks were quite light-hearted in their attitude toward nudity. They thought no more of seeing a naked man on the streets of Syracuse, than we would on the Broadway stage.

And as he ran, Archimedes shouted over and over, "I've got it! I've got it!" Of course, knowing no English, he was compelled to shout it in Greek, so it came out, "Eureka! Eureka!"

Archimedes' solution was so simple that anyone could understand it—once Archimedes explained it.

If an object that is not affected by water in any way is immersed in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

water, it is bound to displace an amount of water equal to its own volume, since two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time.

Suppose, then, you had a vessel large enough to hold the crown, and suppose it had a small overflow spout set into the middle of its side. And suppose further that the vessel was filled with water exactly to the spout, so that if the water level were raised a bit higher, however slightly, some would overflow.

Next, suppose that you carefully lower the crown into the water. The water level would rise by an amount equal to the volume of the crown, and that volume of water would pour out the overflow and be caught in a small vessel. Next, a lump of gold, known to be pure and exactly equal in weight to the crown, is also immersed in the water and again the level rises and the overflow is caught in a second vessel.

If the crown were pure gold, the overflow would be exactly the same in each case, and the volumes of water caught in the two small vessels would be equal. If, however, the crown were of alloy, it would produce a larger overflow than the pure gold would and this would be easily noticeable.

What's more, the crown would in no way be harmed, defaced, or even as much as scratched. More important, Archimedes had discovered the "principle of buoyancy."

And was the crown pure gold? I've heard that it turned out to be alloy and that the goldsmith was executed, but I wouldn't swear to it.

How often does this "Eureka phenomenon" happen? How often is there this flash of deep insight during a moment of relaxation, this triumphant cry of "I've got it! I've got it!" which must surely be a moment of the purest ecstasy this sorry world can afford?

I wish there were some way we could tell. I suspect that in the history of science it happens *often;* I suspect that very few significant discoveries are made by the pure technique of voluntary thought; I suspect that voluntary thought may possibly prepare the ground (if even that) but that the final touch, the real inspiration, comes when thinking is under involuntary control.

But the world is in a conspiracy to hide that fact. Scientists are wedded to reason; to the meticulous working out of consequences from assumptions; to the careful organization of experiments designed to check those consequences. If a certain line of experiments ends nowhere, it is omitted from the final report. If an inspired guess turns out to be correct, it is *not* reported as an inspired guess. Instead a solid line of voluntary thought is invented after the fact to lead up to the thought, and that is what is inserted in the final report.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The result is that anyone reading scientific papers would swear that *nothing* took place but voluntary thought maintaining a steady, clumping stride from origin to destination, and that just can't be true.

It's such a shame. Not only does it deprive science of much of its glamor (how much of the dramatic story in Watson's "Double Helix" do you suppose got into the final reports announcing the great discovery of the structure of DNA?*), but it hands over the important process of "insight," "inspiration," "revelation" to the mystic.

The scientist actually becomes ashamed of having what we might call a revelation, as though to have one is to betray reason—when actually what we call revelation in a man who has devoted his life to reasoned thought, is after all merely reasoned thought that is not under voluntary control.

Only once in a while in modern times do we ever get a glimpse into the workings of involuntary reasoning, and when we do, it is always fascinating. Consider, for instance, the case of Friedrich August Kekulé von Stradonitz.

In Kekulé's time, a century and a quarter ago, a subject of great interest to chemists was the structure of organic molecules (those associated with living tissue). Inorganic molecules were generally simple in the sense that they were made up of few atoms. Water molecules, for instance, are made up of two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen (H_2O). Molecules of ordinary salt are made up of one atom of sodium and one of chlorine (NaCl) and so on.

Organic molecules, on the other hand, often contained a large number of atoms. Ethyl alcohol molecules have two carbon atoms, six hydrogen atoms and an oxygen atom (C_2H_6O); the molecule of ordinary cane sugar is $C_{12}H_{22}O_{11}$, and other molecules are even more complex.

Then, too, it is sufficient, in the case of inorganic molecules generally, merely to know the kinds and numbers of atoms in the molecule; in organic molecules, more is necessary. Thus, dimethyl ether has the formula, C_2H_6O, just as ethyl alcohol does, and yet the two are quite different in properties. Apparently, the atoms are arranged differently within the molecules—but how determine the arrangements?

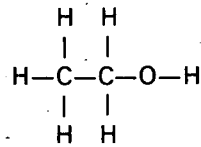
In 1852, an English chemist, Edward Frankland, had noticed that the atoms of a particular element tended to combine with a fixed number of other atoms. This combining number was called "valence." Kekulé, in 1858, reduced this notion to a system. The carbon atom, he decided (on the basis of plenty of chemical evidence), had a valence of four, the hydrogen atom a valence of one, and the oxygen atom a valence of two (and so on.)

I'll tell you, in case you're curious. None!

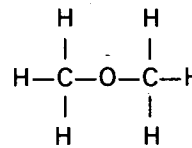
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Why not represent the atoms as their symbols plus a number of attached dashes, that number being equal to the valence. Such atoms could then be put together as though they were so many Tinker Toy units and "structural formulas" could be built up.

It was possible to reason out that the structural formula of ethyl alcohol was



while that of dimethyl ether was



In each case, there were two carbon atoms, each with four dashes attached; six hydrogen atoms, each with one dash attached; and an oxygen atom with two dashes attached. The molecules were built up of the same components, but in different arrangements.

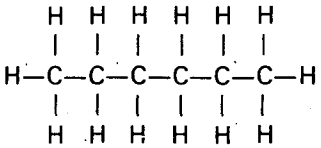
Kekulé's theory worked beautifully. It has been immensely deepened and elaborated since his day, but you can still find structures very much like Kekulé's Tinker-Toy formulas in any modern chemical textbook. They represent oversimplifications of the true situation, but they remain extremely useful in practice even so.

The Kekulé structures were applied to many organic molecules in the years after 1858, and the similarities and contrasts in the structures neatly matched similarities and contrasts in properties. The key to the rationalization of organic chemistry had, it seemed, been found.

Yet there was one disturbing fact. The well-known chemical, benzene, wouldn't fit. It was known to have a molecule made up of equal numbers of carbon and hydrogen atoms. Its molecular weight was known to be 78 and a single carbon-hydrogen combination had a weight of 13. Therefore, the benzene molecule had to contain six carbon-hydrogen combinations and its formula had to be C_6H_6.

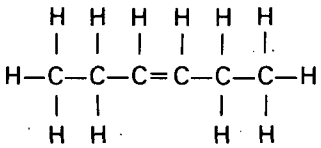
But that meant trouble. By the Kekulé formulas, the hydrocarbons (molecules made up of carbon and hydrogen atoms only) could easily be envisioned as chains of carbon atoms with hydrogen atoms attached. If all the valences of the carbon atoms were filled with hydrogen atoms, as in "hexane," whose molecule looks like this—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



the compound is said to be saturated. Such saturated hydrocarbons were found to have very little tendency to react with other substances.

If some of the valences were not filled, unused bonds were added to those connecting the carbon atoms. Double bonds were formed as in "hexene"—



Hexene is unsaturated, for that double bond has a tendency to open up and add other atoms. Hexene is chemically active.

When six carbons are present in a molecule, it takes fourteen hydrogen atoms to occupy all the valence bonds and make it inert—as in hexane. In hexene, on the other hand, there are only twelve hydrogens. If there were still fewer hydrogen atoms, there would be more than one double bond; there might even be triple bonds, and the compound would be still more active than hexene.

Yet benzene, which is C_6H_6 and has eight fewer hydrogen atoms than hexane, is *less* active than hexene, which has only two fewer hydrogen atoms than hexane. In fact, benzene is even less active than hexane itself. The six hydrogen atoms in the benzene molecule seem to satisfy the six carbon atoms to a greater extent than do the fourteen hydrogen atoms in hexane.

For heaven's sake, why?

This might seem unimportant. The Kekulé formulas were so beautifully suitable in the case of so many compounds that one might simply dismiss benzene as an exception to the general rule.

Science, however, is not English grammar. You can't just categorize something as an exception. If the exception doesn't fit into the general system, then the general system must be wrong.

Or, take the more positive approach. An exception can often be made to fit into a general system, provided the general system is broadened. Such broadening generally represents a great advance and for this reason, exceptions ought to be paid great attention.

For some seven years, Kekulé faced the problem of benzene and tried to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

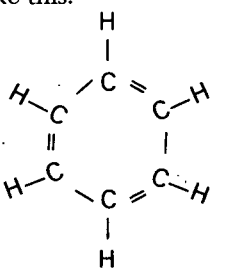
puzzle out how a chain of six carbons could be completely satisfied with as few as six hydrogen atoms in benzene and yet be left unsatisfied with twelve hydrogen atoms in hexene.

Nothing came to him!

And then one day in 1865 (he tells the story himself) he was in Ghent, Belgium, and in order to get to some destination, he boarded a public bus. He was tired and, undoubtedly, the droning beat of the horse's hooves on the cobblestones, lulled him. He fell into a comatose half-sleep.

In that sleep, he seemed to see a vision of atoms attaching themselves to each other in chains that moved about. (Why not? It was the sort of thing that constantly occupied his waking thoughts.) But then one chain twisted in such a way that head and tail joined, forming a ring—and Kekulé woke with a start.

To himself, he must surely have shouted "Eureka," for indeed he had it. The six carbon atoms of benzene formed a ring and not a chain so that the structural formula looked like this:



To be sure, there were still three double bonds, so you might think the molecule had to be very active—but now there was a difference. Atoms in a ring might be expected to have different properties from those in a chain, and double bonds in one case might not have the properties of those in the other. At least, chemists could work on that assumption and see if it involved them in contradictions.

It didn't. The assumption worked excellently well. It turned out that organic molecules could be divided into two groups: aromatic and aliphatic. The former had the benzene ring (or certain other similar rings) as part of the structure and the latter did not. Allowing for different properties within each group, the Kekulé structures worked very well.

For nearly seventy years, Kekulé's vision held good in the hard field of actual chemical techniques, guiding the chemist through the jungle of reactions that led to the synthesis of more and more molecules. Then, in 1932, Linus Pauling applied quantum mechanics to chemical structure with sufficient subtlety to explain just why the benzene ring was so special

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and what had proven correct in practice proved correct in theory as well.

Other cases? Certainly.

In 1764, the Scottish engineer, James Watt, was working as an instrument-maker for the University of Glasgow. The university gave him a model of a Newcomen steam-engine, which didn't work well, and asked him to fix it. Watt fixed it without trouble, but even when it ran perfectly, it didn't work well. It was far too inefficient and consumed incredible quantities of fuel. Was there a way to improve that?

Thought didn't help; but a peaceful, relaxed walk on a Sunday afternoon did. Watt returned with the key notion in mind of using two separate chambers, one for steam only and one for cold water only, so that the same chamber did not have to be constantly cooled and re-heated to the infinite waste of fuel.

The Irish mathematician, William Rowan Hamilton, worked up a theory of "quaternions" in 1843 but couldn't complete that theory until he grasped the fact that there were conditions under which $p \times q$ was *not* equal to $q \times p$. The necessary thought came to him in a flash one time when he was walking to town with his wife.

The German physiologist, Otto Loewi, was working on the mechanism of nerve action; in particular, on the chemicals produced by nerve endings. He woke at 3 A.M. one night in 1921 with a perfectly clear notion of the type of experiment he would have to carry through to settle a key point that was puzzling him. He wrote it down and went back to sleep. When he woke in the morning, he found he couldn't remember what his inspiration had been. He remembered he had written it down, but he couldn't read his writing.

The next night, he woke again at 3 A.M. with the clear thought once more in mind. This time, he didn't fool around. He got up, dressed himself, went straight to the laboratory and began work. By 5 A.M. he had proved his point, and the consequences of his findings became important enough in later years so that in 1936 he received a share in the Nobel Prize in medicine and physiology.

How very often this sort of thing must happen, and what a shame that scientists are so devoted to their belief in conscious thought that they so consistently obscure the actual methods by which they obtain their results.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

As the title implies, this story concerns a series of deaths that are somehow woven together. We'll only add that the pattern is vivid and totally engrossing, and we look forward to more good things from Mr. Bishop, whose first story, "Darktree, Darktide," appeared here only two months ago.

A TAPESTRY OF LITTLE MURDERS

by Michael Bishop

WHEN PETER MAZARAK LEFT HIS house, it was two-thirty in the morning. Both pale and introspective, Mazarak was a young man, and he drove away from his house brooding on two separate but irrevocably yoked concerns.

His side ached with a malignancy of more than a month's tenure, and he had just killed his wife.

As he navigated the asphalt lane that skirted the country club, Mazarak looked out on the slumbering fairways and created monsters from their rolling flanks and moon-dappled surfaces. Shadows from the overarching pines played in the warp of his windshield. He thought the shadows were like ludicrously thin birds imprisoned in the glass, in the flat crystal heart of the windshield itself. But that was fancy, he kept telling himself, the confusion of his shredded sensibility. The shadows were only shadows: moonlight broken by the pine trees he was driving past. At two-god-damn-thirty in the morning.

Because you have to flee the pain you create, Mazarak thought, *as well as the pain within you.*

And he was fleeing from the gratuitous commission of pain he had effected, without even meaning to, against his own wife. The argument—the fatal argument—had resulted when he had come home long past a credible hour and then tried to shift the blame to Ruth's father. For that was Mazarak's position: In the indentured service of his own father-in-law he huckstered farm equipment, tried to sell monstrous yellow harvesting machines. Ordinarily the yellow machines sat on the company lot beneath an incandescent Georgia sun and grew as metallically scalding as electric hot plates. But just that afternoon, Mazarak told his wife, they had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sold three such machines, and the Old Man had kept him there in the partitioned-off auditing room going over the papers, the contracts, the orders of delivery.

That was why he had been late.

As the daughter of a man who had made his fortune peddling farm equipment, Ruth had to understand the complexity of these transactions. (When he said this, Mazarak envisioned his wife's father sitting astride a yellow tractor, literally *pedaling*.) If she was angry, she could blame the Old Man. She could blame the tractors, cultivators, harvesters, threshing machines—all the things that provided the young Mazaraks such a respectable, gaudy livelihood. Or she could blame the paperwork.

Ultimately, however, they both knew the excuse was a ridiculous one. The Old Man, after all, worked on a strict priority basis. Customers had to present written orders for the machinery they required; all the company paperwork was handled well in advance. Besides, Mazarak had no particular skill in the area of clerical tasks.

The excuse didn't work. They both knew it.

To complicate things, Mazarak had been nursing the tension inside himself for well over a month, redirecting it outward as a kind of feeble static. An argument had been unavoidable, necessary, fated.

When it came, the violence of it momentarily quelled Mazarak's vacillating tension, and he began to think about pain. Pain was like matter: It could be neither created nor destroyed. This incongruous excursion into metaphysics left Mazarak feeling as if he had discovered a universal maxim. He had felt that way even as he silenced Ruth's screaming amber eyes by fracturing her skull with a poker from the fireplace.

In fact, the pain that flared up in Ruth's eyes seemed almost to diminish the excruciating agony in his side. The one went a small way toward canceling the other. But only a small way. As he swung the blackened iron over her head, he cursed Ruth's helplessness. He cursed the Old Man. He cursed the pain that had driven him out of his customary introspection into so brutal and heinous an act.

And finally he cursed the sleek-skulled little man who had been the cause of his tardiness that evening.

For even though it was now two-thirty, only a few short hours ago that same little man, wrapped in the graceful white wings of his medical smock, had confirmed Mazarak's malignancy. With exasperating compassion. His only suggestion had been that Mazarak resign himself to the disease while actively seeking a cure.

Now Mazarak was fleeing that inescapable pain as the shadow of a crystal-thin bird struggled inside his windshield.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It seemed to him that he had been driving along the peripheries of the country club forever. When would he reach the main highway? How long would it take him to pass into the teemingly dense woods of Alabama? The route was westward, necessarily westward, but Mazarak began to believe he would never find an exit from the labyrinth of Oleander Springs, his own rural-suburban neighborhood. He began to think he would never see the chiseled granite faces of the mountains toward which necessity was driving him. The house where his wife lay dead was only fifteen minutes distant.

Then his automobile headlamps delineated the bulk of some small living thing on the asphalt.

Pain caressed Mazarak's hip, his side.

Whatever the living thing was, it presented a form of surprising plasticity under the headlamps. Advancing from the left-hand shoulder, it moved by a series of filliping jerks until it was in the center of the roadway.

Mazarak ran over it.

With a nearly inaudible *pop* the thing exploded against the automobile's heavy chassis.

Two more of the things appeared on the roadway. They were cream-colored excrescences in the yellow light, mere distortions on the asphalt. In a very brief moment, however, they had become amorphous lumps juggling one another without the aid of a magician. Mazarak ran over these things, too, and they made hollow popping sounds beneath the tires. Brittle implosions. Like the lungs of a diver at too great a depth.

Then, for as far as Mazarak could see by the shimmering wash of his headlights, the roadway accommodated endless swarms of these filliping things. Shapeless lumps of moving, migrating matter. The night was heavy with their pilgrimage.

"Toads," Mazarak said. "The road is full of toads."

It was. In the early morning dampness the toads had come out to let cool moisture seep lubricatingly into their grainy hides. Now they were migrating from the lawns of Mazarak's neighbors, across the asphalt, to the fetid ditch water on the perimeters of the golf course. Over this mad exodus fireflies winked like lanterns at sea, and Mazarak ran over toad after toad, toad after toad. Under his tires he felt the vital amphibian plasma spill in life-quenching gouts, drain away with each revolution, each thumping revolution. But as he grimaced at each dull thump, he forgot the agony that plagued him. That agony subsided. It diminished. In its place came a numb awareness that permitted him to recall, with something like disinterest, Ruth's preoccupation with a specific toad that had lived in their backyard.

Just two evenings ago—how was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

it that Ruth was dead?—they had walked together along the patio wall. Simply to be walking. Detecting a movement under her foot, Ruth had made a small inward gasp and clutched at Mazarak's arm.

"What is it?" he asked her.

"A toad. A toad pretending to be a lump of dirt."

"He's not much of a pretender if he doesn't know to keep still."

"He knows he doesn't have to be a pretender."

"Very analytical of the toad. How does he know?"

"Because he knows that I know him," Ruth said. "He lives under the cinder block by the water faucet, and he knows that nobody here is going to evict him."

"Oh, good."

"And he eats insects."

"Tough for the insects."

"But good for the flowers," Ruth said.

Then she had faced away, to lean against the wall. Mazarak watched the toad move lumpily through the flower bed and disappear under the cinder block.

"When I was a little girl," Ruth had said musingly, "Daddy went to a sales conference in eastern Colorado and brought me home a horned toad. From the prairie."

"Well, your father always had a knack for giving you just what you wanted."

"Do you know what happened to it?"

"It died," Mazarak said. "All your fond memories about pets have tragic endings."

He had not attempted levity in a long time. Ruth turned from the wall and stuck her tongue out at him. He reciprocated. Then she threw her head back and laughed indelicately, a hard dry laugh that altered the contours of her face.

"Smart aleck. Do you know *why* it died?"

"No."

"Well, when I first saw it, I thought it was suffering from a skin disorder of some kind. Dishpan body, I suppose. All the bumps and spines on its back, you know."

"A horny toad. I know."

"So I covered its back with a thick layer of hand lotion. To smooth away the blemishes and render the helpless creature attractive to his girlfriends."

"Commendable."

"I covered it with hand lotion every day for three days, and it died. It died in spite of my intentions."

"How about that," Mazarak said. "How tragic."

Ruth had looked at him then with those thinly shrouded amber eyes, eyes seemingly hidden behind a nictitating film. She touched the collar of Mazarak's shirt and spoke reflectively.

"The colored man who worked for us when I was little—he once ran over a toad with our power mower. Did you know that?"

"No. It's been a long time since your daddy's regaled his salesmen

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with an amusing anecdote about the help."

"Do you know what happened?"

"Ruth!" he had shouted. "For God's sake!"

"The blades chewed up that toad and spat him out in a hundred horrible gray and white pieces."

Mazarak had tried to silence her; he had tried to rebuke her for her self-defeating morbidity. But before he could speak, she was weeping painfully and leaning into his arms.

"It hurt, Pete. It hurt me to watch that happen. The blades made a thumping sound and . . ."

And the toads died under his automobile. Unperturbedly they continued to hop across the roadway, perishing with scarcely audible thumps. But with the windows down Mazarak could hear their resilient bodies on every impact—bursting, imploding.

The asphalt behind him was strewn with their flattened carcasses, and he knew himself to be very much like the Negro lawnman of Ruth's childhood. Very much like him. The similarities, in fact, went beyond a simple inadvertent participation in slaughter. But although his side now hurt almost not at all, Mazarak did not try to enumerate these similarities. Instead, he waited. The toads' *danse macabre* finally came to an end, and he accelerated.

In the ripening darkness he found the highway that would carry him toward the mountains.

Small towns, inviolate hamlets, flashed by and then swept away like pasteboard tickets on the wind: Cuthbert, Eufaula, Comer, Three Notch.

Going through the darkened town squares, Mazarak stared out on the empedestaled heroes of the Confederate dead. The roughly hewn, piebald faces of the statues stared back, but their empty eyes haunted Mazarak, and the pain in his side reasserted itself so strongly that he cursed all heroes, living and dead alike. At last the statues disappeared in the lacework wisteria of the night, however, and he saw ahead of him the harsh floodlit glare of a truckstop.

They can't be after me yet, he thought. *It could be another ten hours before they find her. Maybe more.*

He pulled in. While an attendant filled his car with gas, Mazarak ate a half-melted Hershey bar and watched the hard brown beetles that were rattling against the floodlights. Western music buzzed from a juke box behind the cafe's screen door. Among the trucks and truckers, he felt helplessly out of place.

A strange incident heightened his sense of alienation.

Just before he got back in his car, Mazarak saw a trucker come out of the cafe, stop by a gasoline pump, and crush between his hard fingers the shells of two or three peanuts. The man threw the shells down as if

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they were somehow contemptible and then found himself staring, over the pumps and oil display racks, into Mazarak's eyes. Immediately the trucker's expression took on a cast distinctly hostile, and Mazarak looked down.

He looks like Ruth's father, he thought. *But Ruth's father made taut and glassy-eyed by long hours in the lofty cab of a diesel truck.*

When he looked up again, the man was mounting to the mustard-colored cab and preparing to back out of the trucker's station. But before he could leave, Mazarak paid the attendant, started his own vehicle, and fled.

For miles the pungent, heavily warm odors of a paper mill followed him. So intense was his resurging pain, however, that he didn't care.

He drove all that morning and into the first light of a colorless dawn. He encountered no traffic on the highway, and the road's warm surfacing seemed to melt into the consistency of licorice, impeding motion.

The world slowed down.

Suddenly Mazarak began to have hallucinatory flashes in which he saw—of all illogical things—his own backyard. The further westward he traveled, the more frequently came the flashes.

It was Christmas day. The afternoon was bright, blue, wispy, as in Indian summer; and he and Ruth were standing beside the soot-blackened incinerator behind the patio wall. The two of them had built the incinerator shortly after their marriage. A pile of stones—loosely cemented stones. It was the only "improvement" on their property that they had even attempted to make, an improvement which doubled, with its mortared chimney and removable steel grating, as a barbecue grill. But on that Christmas day (Mazarak could not remember how many Christmases had intervened) they had gone into the backyard not to sear a pair of steaks into charcoaled anonymity but to finish an argument. Mazarak remembered that he had been angry. There had been no sinister animal gnawing at his flank on that day, no nameless organic hurt to conceal, but he had suffered an emotional pain that compensated utterly for these lacks.

Ruth stood a little away from him, in the shadow of a tall blue conifer. He was occupied, however, and made no pretense of listening to what she said.

"Pete, this doesn't make sense."

He didn't answer. He was feeding the contents of a huge Manila envelope onto the broken coals beneath the incinerator's grate. Policies. Bonds. Premiums. Sheet after sheet of ornately stenciled paper. Christmas presents. Each sheet grew crimson along its edges, curled, and then crumpled upon itself like a delicate, otherworld flower. When Mazarak had dis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tributed these items, he tossed the Manila envelope on the coals. This act had something of a dramatic finality about it, and Ruth spoke bitterly.

"I suppose you think you've reclaimed your manhood."

"Instant psychoanalysis," Mazarak said. "Too damn easy."

"Well, it doesn't make sense. Tossing everything on the fire."

"It makes sense to me," Mazarak said. "The Old Man can take his twenty-year harvest of insurance policies and half-ripe bonds and lug them back to the deposit box. Who does he think he is, sending us this patronizing crap?"

"He thinks he's my father."

Mazarak raged at this reply and told Ruth that her understanding of the relationship was too shallow. The Old Man was not so much her father as she was his earnestly cleaving daughter, forevermore under his wing. But in the shadow of the blue pine Ruth behaved not at all like a child. Her arguments made him step away from the incinerator, out of the vapory heat, and reconsider his tactics.

Nothing more than a fine, but insane, gesture. That was what she called his burning of the documents. It proved nothing—except perhaps that he indulged in purblind self-deception.

"You know he keeps copies of everything," Ruth said. "You know you've had it both ways this afternoon."

"Maybe I have," he responded. "But at least it's a gesture; it's better than nothing."

Then they had stood together and watched the updraft from the incinerator carry the charred remains of her father's papers into the sky. Through the blue openings fringed with pine needles. Up into the dappled afternoon. When Ruth finally spoke to him again, she said only a few anguished syllables.

"The ashes. They look like dying birds."

As Mazarak remembered this, the brutality of the outside world shattered his reverie. Something struck his windshield—with a dull frightening thud. It was a bi d. Even though he had been dreaming of another time, he knew immediately it was a bird. It had penetrated his farsightedness, appeared at sudden close range (as if bursting through the membranes of another continuum), and smacked against the glass. The bird then ricocheted off the windshield into oblivion.

And Mazarak, at once awake, sat up behind the steering wheel and experienced a fierce recrudescence of pain.

The corridor of vacancy above the roadway had filled with wings. Never had he seen so many floating scraps of plumage, like ashes drifting on the sky. All the wings belonged to mockingbirds. Mobile abstractions, the mockingbirds glided out of the tar-smeared conifers on each side of the highway and in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scribed huge interlocking circles of descent.

Alabama, Mazarak thought, *I'm still in Alabama.*

But it was a gentle paperweight snowstorm of feathers that had engulfed him. With one violent exception: An occasional thud against Mazarak's windshield killed for him the illusion of gentleness.

Three, four, five, six—perhaps seven mockingbirds struck the windshield. Oriental in their delicate hovering beauty, they immolated themselves with all the ruthlessness of miniature kamikaze intelligences. Mazarak watched, unbelieving. Unbelieving, he tried to keep track. One bird undulated over the highway in chiaroscuro suspension and then rushed forward to die against the glass. Mazarak, horrified, saw that the creature was immune to fear—just before it struck, one of the bird's opalescent eyes reflected back at him, in blood-red microcosm, his own uncontrollable fear. Then the thud.

And still Mazarak had in his nostrils the oppressive odors from the paper mill. They had followed him all night, growing stronger rather than weaker.

How many birds ultimately died escaping that stimulus, he had no idea. But at last it seemed to him that the entire species had participated in ritualistic suicide. There were russet smears on the windshield, and Mazarak automatically turned on the wiper blades.

He discovered his mistake at once.

Fluid grime swept back and forth in incomplete semicircles, altering the landscape. Soon he was looking not through the glass but at it, for caught beneath the wiper blade was a single mockingbird's quill that hypnotized Mazarak with its fluttering *klihk-klihk, klihk-klihk.* Like a metronome. As always, the end result was numb imprisonment inside his own mind.

His automobile rocked and slewed. It bounced forward like a guttered bowling ball. Then the tires caught the shoulder and churned through the gravel there. Savagely, Mazarak slammed the brake pedal. In a moment he was sitting inside his quivering automobile at a dead stop, half on the road, half off. He held his head in his hands and looked disconsolately at the knob of the cigarette lighter.

Where does all the pain go? he asked the cigarette lighter.

The cigarette lighter did not respond.

But that was just as well. For even though Mazarak had no pain at all in his thoroughly punished flank, he knew fear. A terribly palpable fear.

That night Mazarak found a motel and holed up in it like a reptile seeking shelter under a rock. *Holed up.* Those words, as melodramatic and luridly Western as they sounded, were the only ones that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

adequately summarized his predicament. Because the pain in his side had begun very subtly to reestablish its presence, causing him to picture himself as that small reptilian beast secreting itself away from man's inquisitive eye.

But the next morning he left that motel and drove for an entire day. Without incident. Blessedly without incident. The evening found him quartered in another nondescript motel, and then, once again, he resumed driving westward. He spent his time on the road, however, thinking about the strange occurrences of his first day's travel.

Killing the mockingbirds seemed to Mazarak the antithesis of running over the toads. It was a crime more reprehensible, more poignant to take part in. After all, a toad was a creature unfeelingly cold-blooded, a thing so removed from man's rational spectrum that he couldn't seriously regret murdering one.

But the mockingbirds.

They presented a completely different case. In their choreographed aerial beauty, Mazarak thought, they were very nearly specimens of a higher life-form. That they could cause him to be the instrument of their dying offended Mazarak; it made him dimly aware of his own crassly motivated flight. It made his mind touch on, and then immediately relinquish, the circumstance from which he was fleeing. And pain coursed through him.

But if he could reach the mountains—or even the shadows of the mountains—he would be all right. His pursuers might not follow him into that hard masculine country where the tall grain and arroyo-gutted prairies provided a natural sanctuary. But there were no sanctuaries, really. Mazarak understood that some things did not admit of a simple, unretributive escape; some things required merciless retribution, and there were always people who could be counted on to carry it out.

No. You had to be afraid of the grain fields and the prairies. It was impossible to rely on them.

Mazarak was afraid of roadblocks. He was afraid his pursuers would capture him in the open wasteland, before he had a chance to abandon his automobile and clamber into the sharp, concealing crevices of the Sangre de Cristo foothills. He had several imprecise ideas about how life would be after he had eluded the men carrying his retribution.

Therefore, he drove until it was dark. And kept driving even after the stars had appeared in the beaten silver night overhead. The thought of *holing up* again, of crawling into a three-dollar-a-throw roadhouse, had no allure. It was best to keep moving. Always toward the mountains. In the darkness the prairie surrounded him on all sides, like an ocean beneath which something insidious moved.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then it happened again.

Mazarak had no time to adjust to the change.

Creatures were moving in the prairie grasses. They were tiny creatures, the sort a man could take between his thumb and forefinger and squeeze until the brittle skull made a crumpling sound of capitulation.

Kangaroo rats.

Mazarak had never seen one before, but he knew what they were as soon as he saw them leaping fragilely through the alkaline grasses. At once they came up on the highway in a disorganized parade of singles: delicate little animals with palsied forelegs and eyes that burned amber in his headlights. Each kangaroo rat tested the asphalt with a series of diminutive hops and then confronted his automobile. The headlights hypnotized them, froze them upright.

Not again, Mazarak said to himself. *Dear God, not again.*

Then he was counting, involuntarily recording the number of deaths. It was not an easy process. The kangaroo rats made so little noise when the undergirding of his automobile drove their bodies to the ground or wrenched their heads aside. And there were so many of them. How could he keep count? Nevertheless, he made the effort, for he had the building suspicion now that each rat's death was a black mark in the register of his own precariously salvable life. Already, he knew, a more telling IOU weighted the register against him. He had to keep count—just to determine his place in purgatory.

Seven, eight, nine.

Congregations of little bodies, all tentatively leaping. Mazarak could not help but see how much they resembled naked little men, with undeveloped arms and frozen eyes. Each death pained him, pained him deeply—even though the successive collisions brought him closer to the painless state of a straw-stuffed dummy. He could do nothing with his automobile; it rushed forward, as if free of rational control.

Twenty? Twenty-one? He wasn't sure. Numbers eluded him, but the kangaroo rats did not.

A dimly luminous mist crossed the highway, blotting out both moon and stars. Mazarak could still see the rats dancing onto the highway and then halting in blind petrifaction—but he was like a man looking through surgical gauze. The mist accomplished that much against him.

Finally, he couldn't see.

All he could do was ride out the intransigence of his car and listen to the rats going under. The car fishtailed, swerved, and scattered wisps of fog. Then he knew that it had carried him off the road.

The sound of shattering glass echoed inside his head even after unconsciousness had overtaken him.

After a long time Mazarak awoke

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and struggled free of the wreckage. It was morning. At a distant remove he could see the precisely carven mountains toward which he had been directing himself for nearly three days.

He stood in the ditch beside his crumpled automobile and tried to orient his faculties. But nothing worked, nothing fell into place.

Beside the highway there was an open field, part of the prairie, but it didn't fit Mazarak's conception of the country he had been traveling through the night before. Something was very different. Grain grew on the prairie, tall rippling stands of wheat so brilliant in the sunlight that he had to stare. Each separate stalk was a miracle, for Mazarak felt certain that no field of grain had bordered the roadside when his accident took place.

Briefly he feared that his pursuers had caught up with him and done something to alter his perception of the world. But this fear flickered out.

Mazarak saw something that made him forget his pursuers. Deep in the wheat field a woman was beckoning to him with the elegant wing-like sleeve of her dressing gown. A hood covered her face, a royal-blue hood. He could see her between the stalks, and she was definitely signaling him to follow her into the rhythmically swaying grain.

He wanted to comply.

But so empty of feeling was he that even the simple act of lifting his foot proved difficult. The ground had almost no resiliency under him—no texture, no firmness. Only by willing the movement inside his head, willing himself to action, was he able to follow the beckoning arm. He approached the woman through the grain. And, as he knew she would, the woman retreated two steps for each numb step forward that he was able to manage. At last her blue garment disappeared in a far stand of wheat and he was left facing the mountains.

He shouted a name. The name echoed away.

Because of this shout, Mazarak almost failed to see the harvesting machine that bore down on him out of the stalks. It made no sound, no noise whatsoever, and the dark figure astride the machine very nearly succeeded in overtaking Mazarak on his blind side. But he turned in time and looked up into the grinning countenance of the driver and simultaneously saw the brutal, silently humming blades. How tall the machine was. This thought comforted Mazarak. He turned again, to face the blades head on.

"All right," he said aloud.

Somehow he knew that there would be no pain, even when the inevitable shredding began. For he was emptied of pain, cured of his malignancy, and it was sweet to die. He noticed with satisfaction that the harvesting machine was yellow, like the voluptuous sun. ◀

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE MAGAZINE OF Fantasy and Science Fiction

MARKET PLACE

BOOKS-MAGAZINES

Books for sale or trade. Free list. Claren David Hissongin, Rt. 2, Howard, Ohio 43028.

SCIENTIFANTASY specialist: Books, magazines. Free catalog. Gerry de la Ree, 7 Cedarwood, Saddle River. N.J. 07458.

TWO issues of P.S. Magazine for $1.00. Humor and nostalgia by Jean Shepherd, Nat Hentoff, Isaac Asimov, Alfred Bester, William Tenn, others. Mercury, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

SPECIALISTS: Science Fiction, Fantasy, Weird Fiction. Books, Pocketbooks. Lists issued. Stephen's Book Service, Post Office Box 321, Kings Park, L.I., New York 11754.

30,000 magazines for sale; science fiction, western, detective, adventure, others. We buy collections, too. Send list, enclosing stamp. Magazine Center, Box 214, Little Rock, Ark. 72203.

70 Page catalog Arkham Fantasy Burroughs, Mirage Press Science Fiction pulp, paperbacks, comics. Send 50¢ Passaic Book Center, 594 Main Avenue, Passaic, N. J. 07055.

SF-Fantasy magazines, books, paperbacks. List free. Collections also purchased. Robert Madle, 4406 Bestor Drive, Rockville, Md. 20853.

SF-FANTASY books (hardcover), mysteries, westerns. Scarce and OP titles. Free lists. Aspen Bookhouse, RD 1, Freeville, N.Y. 13068.

British Science Fiction and Fantasy. Send for free list. Fantast, 75 Norfolk Street, Wisbech, Cambs. England PE 13 2LJ.

SF—Fantasy Books for sale. Gordon Barber, 35 Minneapolis Ave., Duluth, Minn. 55803.

RARE, USED, OUT-OF-PRINT, S.F., Fantasy, Horror. Free Lists. The Haunted Bookshop, Box 134, Uniondale, N.Y. 11553.

STAMPS

OXO. Send $1.00 American or Canadian for 50 different Australian stamps. Price includes return air postage. Dealers prices on application. Any confidential Australian type enquiries welcomed. Running Investments Syndicate, P. O. Box 607, Canberra City, Canberra, A.C.T., Australia, 2600.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

FREE BOOK "999 Successful, Little-Known Businesses." Work home! Plymouth, 435L, Brooklyn, New York 11218.

HYPNOTISM

LEARN WHILE ASLEEP. Hypnotize with your recorder, phonograph. Astonishing details, sensational catalog free. Sleep-learning Research Association, Box 24-FS, Olympia, Washington, 98502.

Hypnotism Revealed. Free Illustrated Details. Powers, 12015 Sherman Road, North Hollywood, California 91605.

FREE Hypnotism, Self-Hypnosis. Sleep learning Catalog! Drawer G-400, Ruidoso, New Mexico 88345.

PERSONAL

WITCHCRAFT, VOODOO HEADQUARTERS. Spells Galore! Occult Correspondence Club. Catalog, 25¢. Cauldron, Box 403-FSF, Rego Park, N.Y. 11374.

Psychic noted ESP Specialist will answer two questions on personal problems, $5.00. Each additional $2.00. Milton Kramer, 4539 W. Howard, Skokie, Ill. 60076.

Five Yes-or-No questions answered by Tarot Cards for $1.00. Pinnacle of Wisdom, P. O. Box 274, Cupertino, Ca. 95129.

Do you have something to advertise to sf readers? Books, magazines, typewriters, telescopes, computers, space-drives, or misc. Use the F&SF Market Place at these low, low rates: $3.00 for minimum of ten (10) words, plus 30¢ for each additional word. Send copy and remittance to: Adv. Dept., Fantasy and Science Fiction, P.O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MISCELLANEOUS

MAKE BIG MONEY raising chinchillas, rabbits, guinea pigs for us. Catalog 25¢. Keeney Brothers Farms, Inc., New Freedom, Pa. 17349

ESP LABORATORY. This new research/service group can help you. For FREE information write: Al G. Manning, ESP Laboratory, 7559 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90046.

PSYCHEDELIC LIGHT BOX KITS—From $5.00! CarrCraft, Dept. 120, P. O. Box 1165, Yucaipa, Calif. 92399.

I have monsters. Average height, 2 inches. In beryllium copper or brass. Free descriptive list on request. Each hand-finished. Sterling E. Lanier, 2315 McClellan Parkway, Sarasota, Florida 33579.

LOSING Hair? Balding? Dandruff? Free copyrighted booklet. Dr. Shiffer Laboratories, Dept. 546, Box 398, Punta Gorda, Florida 33950.

Five issues of VENTURE SCIENCE FICTION for $3.00. August 1969 through August 1970. 75¢ per issue if ordered separately. Mercury Press, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

FOREIGN EDITIONS of Fantasy and Science Fiction. A few copies of French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and English editions available at 75¢ each; three for $2.00. Mercury Press, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

FINE-ART SPACE PRINTS by leading British space artist David A. Hardy—'Black Eye Galaxy', 22" x 36", 'Planet of Alpha Herculis' (red supergiant), 20" x 36"; both show dramatic planetary landscapes and cost $9.00 each, or only $17.00 for BOTH prints (ready for framing). Also unique set of 15 35mm color slides of Hardy lunar & planetary landscapes—send for list. ONLY from: ASTRO ART, Low Road, Haddiscoe, Norwich, NOR 29W, England. (Chk. or I.M.O. only).

PLAY! HEART BEAT! Spread love around. A new dimension in FUN! Tune into your HEART BEAT! $1.00 post paid, Don Grant, 35 East 35 St., N. Y. Dept. 7-h, 10016.

OCCULT

INNER SPACE, The Magazine of the Psychic and Occult, featuring interviews with Isaac Bashevis Singer and Isaac Asimov, Hollywood and the Occult, How to Consult a Medium, and more. Send $1.00 to MERCURY PRESS, Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753.

YOUR MARKET PLACE

A market is people—alert, intelligent, active people.

Here you can reach 180,000 people (averaging three readers per copy—60,000 paid circulation). Many of them are enthusiastic hobbyists—collecting books, magazines, stamps, coins, model rockets, etc.—actively interested in photography, music, astronomy, painting, sculpture, electronics.

If you have a product or service of merit, tell them about it. The price is right: $3.00 for a minimum of ten (10) words, plus 30¢ for each additional word. To keep the rate this low, we must request remittance with the order.

Post office box and number count as two words. No charge for zip code.

Advertising Dept., Fantasy & Science Fiction
P.O. Box 56, Cornwall, Conn. 06753

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

AICKMAN, ROBERT: Ringing the Changes (novelet) ..... May 105
ANDERSON, KAREN: The Unicorn Trade (verse) ..... Apr. 63
ANDERSON, POUL: Bibliography.. Apr. 56
The Queen of Air and Darkness (short novel) ..... Apr. 5
ASIMOV, ISAAC: Science:
Hot Water ..... Jan. 107
Cold Water ..... Feb. 109
Euclid's Fifth ..... Mar. 111
The Plane Truth ..... Apr. 101
Pompey and Circumstance .... May 94
The Eureka Phenomenon ..... June 107
BARR, STEPHEN: The Art Machine ..... Mar. 108
The Man Trainers ..... June 63
BIGGLE, LLOYD, JR.: The Frayed String On The Stretched Forefinger Of Time ..... May 76
BISHOP, MICHAEL: Darktree, Darktide ..... Apr. 94
A Tapestry of Little Murders ..... June 117
BLISH, JAMES: Books ..... Jan. 22
Mar. 14
May 38
Poul Anderson: The Enduring Explosion (article) ... Apr. 52
BRYANT, EDWARD: Her Lover's Name Was Death ..... May 68
BUCK, DORIS PITKIN: Spring and the Green-eyed Girl ..... Jan. 47
CHESBORO, GEORGE: The Sun Pond ..... Mar. 20
DAVIDSON, AVRAM: The Tenant . Mar. 50
DELANY, SAMUEL R.: They Fly At Ciron (novelet) ..... June 32
DICKSON, GORDON: Poul Anderson (profile) ..... Apr. 46
DISCH, THOMAS M.: The Beginning Of April or The End Of March ..... Feb. 77
DORMAN, SONYA: Winter City (verse) ..... Jan. 103
EFFINGER, GEORGE ALEC: A Free Pass To The Carnival . May 45
EKLUND, GORDON: Seeker for Still Life (novelet) ..... Jan. 67
ELLISON, HARLAN: The Human Operators (novelet) ..... Jan. 5
Books ..... June 20
GILLGANNON, MICHAEL: Mr. Krisky's Cross ..... Jan. 28
GOULART, RON: The Way Things Work ..... Mar. 33
GREEN, JOSEPH: The Butterflies of Beauty (novelet) ..... June 82
JENNINGS, GARY: Specialization.. Jan. 118
KELLER, B. L.: Birdlime ..... Mar. 122
KELLEY, LEO P.: Sam ..... Feb. 119
KOONTZ, DEAN R.: Bruno ..... Apr. 111
LOCKE, DAVID M.: The Power of the Sentence ..... Apr. 70
MALZBERG, BARRY N.: Yearbook. May 90
MOORE, RAYLYN: A Different Drummer ..... Feb. 84
If Something Begins ..... May 52
NIVEN, LARRY: There's A Wolf In My Time Machine ..... June 4
PRONZINI, BILL: The Man Who Collected "The Shadow" ... June 75
RAAB, LAWRENCE: Vampires (verse) ..... Feb. 66
RUSS, JOANNA: Books ..... Feb. 60
RUSSELL, RAY: The Fortunes of Popowcer ..... Feb. 100
SALLIS, JAMES: They Fly At Ciron (novelet) ..... June 32
SEARLES, BAIRD: Film Reviews... Jan. 45
Feb. 82
Mar. 49
May 65
June 61
SHAW, BOB: Repeat Performance ..... Feb. 67
TALL, STEPHEN: The Bear With The Knot On His Tail (novelet) ..... May 4
THOMAS, TED: The Tour ..... Mar. 5
TUSHNET, LEONARD: Matchmaker, Matchmaker ..... Jan. 62
VANCE, JACK: The Faceless Man (novel)
part I ..... Feb. 5
part II ..... Mar. 57
VAN VOGT, A. E.: The Human Operators ..... Jan. 5
WALLING, WILLIAM: The Unsigned ..... Apr. 78
WILSON, GAHAN: Cartoons ..... Jan.-June
WILSON, RICHARD: The Day They Had The War ..... June 26
ZEBROWSKI, GEORGE: Heathen God ..... Jan. 35

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

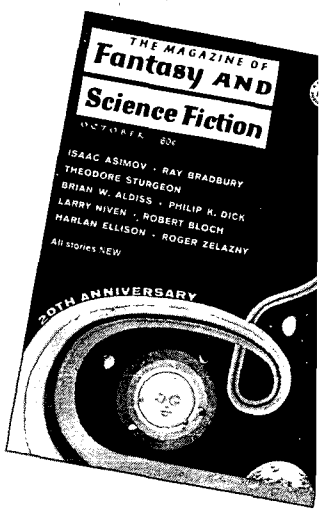
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Imprint of Quality

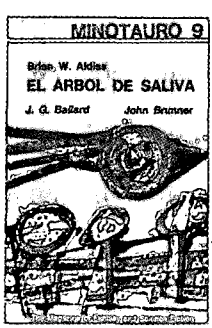
(since 1937)

THE MAGAZINE OF

Fantasy AND Science Fiction



F&SF's readers are both young (84% under 45) and educated (62% have attended college). When they want relaxation or stimulation in reading, they turn to the best works of imagination and to FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION. "F&SF regularly supplies the finest the field has to offer in the way of short fiction"—*Clifton Fadiman*. Compelling fiction, along with informative and stimulating features on *Books* (James Blish) and *Science* (Isaac Asimov), have earned F&SF its reputation as tops in the field.



Spanish Edition

French Edition

Eine Auswahl der besten SF-Stories aus
THE MAGAZINE OF FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION
Saturn im Morgenlicht
Die Maschine, die den Krieg gewann
Der letzte Appell
Der Test
Du bist dabei!
Experiment mit kleinen Fehlern
Saturn im Morgenlicht

German Edition

MERCURY PRESS, INC. • 347 East 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10022

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED